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TITLE 'FROM REVOLUTION TO REBELLION':
CHANGING APPROACHES TO RESISTANCE
BY PERSONS OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN
BERMUDA, 1700-1834

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**'From Revolution to Rebellion': Changing Approaches to Resistance by
Persons of African Descent in Bermuda,
1700-1834.**

by

Clarence Vincent Henry Maxwell

Submitted for the Doctorate of Philosophy Degree

University of Warwick,
Centre for Caribbean Studies

October 1998.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AZ	Court of Assizes
BB	Blue Books
BW	Book of Wills
CO	Colonial Office (PRO)
EXCO	Minutes of the Executive Council

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It is believed that one ancient African tradition is to terminate all human endeavours with an expression of thanks and gratitude to God and our ancestors. I, thus, express my gratitude, following this tradition.

SUMMARY

This study proposes to examine three strategies of resistance undertaken by 'Negroes' and 'Mulattos/Coloureds' of African descent in Bermuda, between 1700 and 1834. The first concerns the politics surrounding the poisoning episodes of 1726 to 1731; the second, the rise and fall of revolutionary resistance from 1761 to 1764; and the third, the politics of what will be identified as nineteenth-century radical resistance. Overall, it will chart what has been heretofore implied in the literature on Bermudian history as a change in resistance to the 'customs of the country': a change from an era of violent and revolutionary methods and goals to an era dominated by non-violent and non-revolutionary- radical- approaches. Contexts for these changes will also be provided. Three classes of people will emerge as fundamentally connected to each of these strategies. Persons of a 'Gold Coast' heritage will be argued as mainly connected with the introduction of poisoning technology. The enslaved merchant-sailor will be associated with the development of a revolutionary conspiracy. Free 'Negroes' and free 'Coloureds' will be focused on when examining the development of nineteenth-century radicalism.

The Preface

Laws and practices developed in Bermuda during the seventeenth century that came to constitute its 'customs of the country'. The phrase 'customs of the country' is from Hilary Beckles, whose discussion of similar developments in Barbados will appear below. It carries a two-fold meaning in this study: the custom of racial slavery, born in the years between 1616 and 1669; and the customs enforcing a hierarchical and racial socio-political order. New laws, practices, and attitudes were often added to the old body of 'customs of the country'; yet, as a group, they shaped the social, economic, and political relations of the Bermuda colony.

The central argument of this thesis lies not entirely in the 'customs of the country', but in the resistance to them. Two eras of resistance have been identified, and divide up the one-hundred-and-thirty-four-year period examined in this thesis. The first period of resistance was characterised by violent and revolutionary conspiracies; it stretched from 1720 to 1764. The second era, from 1800 to 1834, contained and was defined by its non-violent, non-revolutionary, 'radical' resistance. The forces that conditioned these approaches to resistance will also be examined.

The first era was, as stated, dominated by violent and revolutionary conspiracies. The violent enterprise studied here will be the use of poison in resistance. This, of course, does not negate the existence of other acts of violence. But the emphasis on poison plots comes from their role as the pre-eminent violent

acts of the pre-1764 period. Poison plots emerged in the years between 1726 and 1729, though they were uncovered by the colonial government in the 1730s. Poisoning returned as an element in the revolutionary Conspiracy of 1761.

But to understand the violent and revolutionary conspiracies, one must understand the formation of the two classes that contradicted the servile and colonial order in Bermuda: the enslaved African and the enslaved merchant-sailor. It was through the enslaved African that a new and effective technology entered local resistance. It was, in essence, the application of poison out of the African medical context. Through the enslaved merchant-sailor came the desire for a Bermuda revolution, as a reaction to the new 'Negro Laws' which were felt to threaten the vibrant, international and underground servile economy.

The term revolution requires further explanation. It does not, in this thesis, refer to an ideological or even economic change in the relations between Bermuda's bond and free colonists. Instead, it is restricted to a socio-political relationship. The term 'political' refers to what can be loosely called the 'economy of power': the production, distribution, and consumption or enjoyment of the means of power and influence.¹ Thus, the desire for political revolution will have a three-part meaning: the attempt by the enslaved to redistribute the means of power; the attempt to secure sovereign control over the colony; and the attempt to end British imperial management. Revolution is, therefore, not just described as a local overthrow of a local colonial elite, but as a broader anti-colonial struggle. As will be seen, the desire for political revolution that informed the Conspiracy of 1761 (and with it also characterised pre-1764 servile resistance) satisfies the definition

given. It was through it that the caste of enslaved revolted against the caste of elite overlords and a British imperial authority.

Laws passed in 1764, in large part formulated before the Conspiracy of 1761, constituted one important contextual element in the birth of the post-1764 era. This era is defined in this thesis as a period of non-revolutionary and non-violent resistance. The focus of this discussion concerns the 1800 to 1834 time frame of 'Late Slavery'. Internationally, there was a well-known change in opinion regarding slavery, and in particular, the emergence of a liberal attitude in England that challenged the legitimacy of servile bondage. This anti-slavery accompanied the feeling that if emancipation of the slaves should occur, then it had to occur after the moral and intellectual development of the bondservant. Along with a 'Humanitarian Revolution' that contained all of these intentions, marched a trail of missionaries and religious educators to the colonies, desiring to 'free the bondsman from slavery, ignorance and sinfulness'.

The colonial government in 1764 had offered both a 'carrot' and a 'stick' to 'Negroes' and 'coloureds'. The 'carrot' was the ability of some 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' to exist as free people in Bermuda, without the threat of expulsion. The 'stick', however, effectively ended the era of the poison plots. Large numbers of accused participants in the Conspiracy of 1761 were rounded up and expelled on mere suspicion. Obeah was repressed. Codes sprang up to all but eliminate the application of medicine by the enslaved. A new body of laws emerged to regulate every 'Negro' and 'mulatto', either bond or free. *The Act for the Better Government of Negroes, etc.... Bond and Free* (1764) which enshrined these laws, gave codified order to vague and often unwritten prohibitions of the 'customs of

the country'. They were further codified by the *Act of the Amelioration of Slavery* (1827).

The result of all these developments was a regulated caste of free 'blacks' and free 'coloureds' whose members could, for the first time, aspire to wealth and comfort in Bermuda. Some, as will be seen, bought land, homes and businesses. Others extended their literacy or gained it. But all were, as a caste, regulated by a re-formulated body of 'customs of the country'. While 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' audaciously aspired to equality with 'whites', racial codes demanded their socio-political subordination.

With changes in metropolitan opinion, large numbers of 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' found allies. But these allies were mostly metropolitan English: the new 'black' and 'coloured' aspirations were not greeted with enthusiasm from many among the local colonial elite and 'white' proprietary classes. Whatever view metropolitan liberals and local 'blacks' and 'coloureds' had of the 'Humanitarian Revolution', this movement was still seen as a challenge to the local 'ways of doing things'.

The term 'radical' adequately describes, from a Bermuda colonial context, 'black' and 'coloured' designs. Radicalism is defined by the *Collins English Dictionary* as a movement "...favouring ... fundamental changes in political, economic or social conditions, institutions, etc....".² But the term 'radical' in this thesis has a more restricted meaning, developed to distinguish it from 'revolution'. Radicalism is here seen as aiming at the laws and customs, seeking changes in them without demanding the overthrow of the government or the imperial regime. This goes beyond the dictionary definition, which nonetheless left open the possibility of

that type of political challenge. This usage is justified by a need to underscore just how both *extreme* and *constrained* these demands were. They, on the one hand, sought extreme change in the socio-political order, at least as seen from a Bermuda perspective; but they did not seek an anti-colonial revolt. 'Negro' and 'coloured' actions for equality, whether they took the form of petitions or the innocuous appearance of seeking literacy, had nakedly aspired to reduce the socio-political distance between the 'black' and 'coloured' caste and the caste of 'whites'. These demands, and the myriad of acts they motivated, clearly challenged the *raison d'être* of Bermuda's 'customs of the country': from the colonial point of view they were considered extreme, and, thus, radical.

But the movement for equality from within the colonial system, with the assistance of metropolitan allies, clearly differed from the type of revolutionary planning of the earlier pre-1764 era; and it was in its non-violence that it differed from the poisoning schemes of the previous period. Nineteenth-century 'Negro' and 'coloured' radicalism did not retaliate against the 'customs of the country' by seeking to kill obnoxious proprietors, or by removing an obnoxious government. It merely sought to undermine the *degree* of inequality that existed between 'white' and 'black/coloured' colonists. Consequently, the Abolition Acts of 1834 would come to represent something different from earlier laws: a resulting synthesis of metropolitan agitation, colonial elite intransigence, and 'black' and 'coloured' radical objectives.

Two peculiarities emerge in this thesis which are worth explaining. The first begins with a principle: the controversial dictum of nineteenth-century historian

Leopold Von Ranke to 'tell it like it really was', or, as it is conceived here, to 'tell it like it really is in the source material'.³ An application of Von Ranke's dictum to race-reality in Bermuda developed in the attempt to ensure that the boundary between modern and historical race classifications would be rigidly maintained. Black', 'white', 'Negro', 'mulatto', and 'Indian' were to be defined by the historical period, not by the modern student of history.

Several advantages emerge from distinguishing historical and modern racial classificatory systems and terms. Particularly, with regards to racial names alone, something of the nature of the period is revealed. One can take, for example, the early *circa* 1623 use of the names 'Negar' and 'Negro'. Terms such as 'Negro' 'mulatto' and 'mustee' were, of course, English language renderings of the Hispanic names '*Negro*', '*mulatto*', and '*mestizo*'. All of these terms reflect how much of the Hispanic plantation experience English colonists sought to adopt and adapt; and it will be advanced that the Hispanic economic development project for the Americas was the model, in some respects, for the English in Bermuda. But the term 'negar' more closely approaches, phonetically, the old Latin adjective *niger* than the Hispanic *negro*. Indeed, the resemblance is exact if one remembers that the 'g' in Latin is usually hard.⁴ Interestingly, 'negar' all but vanishes from the Bermuda documentation after the early seventeenth century, though it would evolve into a pejorative expression. This 'evolution' may reflect that it became less of a term of elevated use, and more one of the vulgar. Nonetheless, in its earlier form, it was a synonym for 'Negro', referring to roughly the same type of person.

Whatever the reason for the dual use in early colonial history, the presentation of 'negar' and 'Negro' in this thesis, beyond the context of a direct

quotation, helps to communicate two important things: the evolution of race expressions; and the terminological diversity during what will below be called the 'first contact' period (1616-1623). It must be left to a future study to unpack further the reason for these terminological changes since, as such, these developments go beyond the priorities of this thesis. But that there was a shift needs to be communicated in some fashion, and the use of these names, as they appeared in a period's documentation, was one way of achieving this. Obviously, given the problems that could arise from the use of terms like 'Negar' without any quotation punctuation, the necessity of these marks is clear. The need for these marks further underscores how much certain phrases can intrinsically belong to a given historical context. They underline the distinction between what belongs to the history of the period and what is the advocated terminology of the student of history.

With regards to the meaning of these designations, not only does a greater understanding of the period arise, but certain dangers avoided. Racial classifications in history were vague, arbitrary, diverging and often constituted by political motivations.⁵ Indeed, one of the more paradoxical features of Bermuda's history was that, regardless of the importance of race in socio-political ordering, there was an obvious lack of clarity and consistency in race/caste designations. Moreover, the classifications themselves changed over the space of time.

It is worth noting, for example, that by the mid-nineteenth century, it became fashionable to refer to all persons, previously classed as 'black' and 'mulatto', as 'coloured'. Consequently, Blue Books divided the local population into either 'white' or 'coloured'. It was a practice which produced an illuminating

complaint from a post-1834 governor, William Reid: "'The classification by races has a tendency to maintain a distinction between them, even after it is effaced from the skin by intermarriage. All children of any degree of African blood are here regarded as coloured and classed as coloured people.'"⁶

Even at a theoretical level there has been conflict over definitions. St. Clair Drake noted that the tripartite classification of 'Negro', 'white', and 'Asian', accepted in some form today, was created by the Swede, Linneaus, in his *Systema Natura* (1735).⁷ Significantly, it developed in a context of sugar production and exportation, the slave trade and the racialisation of labour. But, as Gilles Boëtsche and Jean-Noël Ferrié observed, it would not be agreed upon by scholars, and there persists disagreement on authoritative scientific classifications of humankind.⁸

It is, as an extension of this point, equally significant, regarding those of African descent, that the very notion of a 'black' identity was not universally accepted: not all Africans apparently shared the cultural/racial classification norms of European colonists and academics. W. Jeffrey Bolster wrote of how the creation of a new black ethnicity was the *result* of creolisation: "... with little chance of repatriation to a now strange Africa, these black intellectuals [Olaudah Equiano and James Albert Ukawsaw Gronnisaw] envisioned themselves as members of an international black community."⁹ It would, thus, be incorrect to assume that a 'black' identity was never accepted by any African; Makandal's revolt underscored the danger of such an assumption. But it does not deny the importance of making clear what *were* the historical 'blacks', 'Negroes', 'mulattos', and 'whites' (African-derived and otherwise), and what *are* the modern 'blacks', 'Negroes' and 'whites' of the student of history.

Finally, the failure to separate the historical from the modern in race classifying is heuristically dangerous: subtle historical distinctions, loaded with political import, are easily obscured by so doing. This is what exactly what happens when historical 'Negroes' and 'mulattos' are conceived as belonging to one group, following a twentieth-century North American and Bermudian race-classifying system. One can be left with the assumption that all 'blacks' were treated alike; and that unlike other jurisdictions there was no legalised special treatment for 'mulattos', as there clearly was in Bermuda by the mid-seventeenth century. By extension, the experiences of individuals are likewise obscured. For example, Sarah Bassett, a 'mulatto' woman who will be discussed in greater detail below, had her personal history and resentments take on different dimensions when her racial designation was reflected against the background of the politics of the late 1600s. Thus, at the level of presentation, and at a heuristic level, this approach to race hopes to reveal the true ethnic-political circumstances of the pre-1834 era, particularly in relation to issues of resistance.

The second peculiarity is the abundant appearance of the terms bondsman and bondservant. The *Collins English Dictionary* supports the point that bondsman and bondservant mean "...a serf or slave."¹⁰ Bondsman was defined as "...another word for bondservant."¹¹ As with slave, both can be seen as implying the extension of 'property-in-man', under law and custom, over the body and the descendants of an individual. The development of bondservants/slaves is the central element in the creation of Bermuda's 'customs of the country'.

But there is an important cosmetic difference between the terms 'slave' and 'bondservant'. 'Slave' and 'slavery', by themselves, carry egregious implications of absolute powerlessness and lack of agency. As the *Collins English Dictionary* noted, popular and academic uses define the condition of a slave as of "...a person legally owned by another and having no freedom of action or right to property."¹² It will be seen that this definition cannot be found in any colonial 'customs of the country', even those of an extreme jurisdiction like eighteenth-century Bermuda. Bondservant, bondsman and bondswoman are expressions used to reflect the idea of 'property-in-man'. But they are also used to blunt the lack of agency of the term 'slave' implied by, to borrow a phrase from Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, the 'tradition of the language'.¹³ Indeed, it is this need to retain an appearance of agency, in a discussion that is primarily concerned with the cut and thrust of a political relationship, that supports the use of these cumbersome expressions in this thesis.

It was once declared that historiographical theses increasingly pre-occupy themselves with the margins of human history. While this might be justly claimed of this thesis, what is hoped is that a basic requirement has been satisfied: that a new and original contribution will be seen in this study of resistance. The thesis begins from the historical context: with the development of the 'customs of the country'.

Endnotes: Preface

¹ Rod Hague and Martin Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: and introduction* (London: Macmillan, 1982, 1987), p. 3.

² *Collins English Dictionary* (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1991), p. 949.

³ E.H. Carr, *What is History?: the George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures delivered at the University of Cambridge January-March 1961* (New York: Vintage, 1961), p. 5.

⁴ *The Bantam New College Latin & English Dictionary*, edited by John C. Traupman (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), p. 4. According to the dictionary editor, in ecclesiastical usage the *g* was softened before the vowels *e* and *i*. However, the hard *g* was used in classical Latin. Either pronunciation would approach 'negar' far closer than the Hispanic 'Negro'.

⁵ See David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: philosophy and the politics of meaning* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 61-89, and passim; Wyatt Macgaffey, "Concepts of race in the historiography of Northeast Africa", *Journal of African History*, VII:1, passim; Arnold Sio, "Race, Colour, and Miscegenation: the free coloured of Jamaica and Barbados", *Caribbean Studies*, 16:1 (1976), p. 8.

⁶ Olwyn M. Blouet, "Governor Reid in Post-Emancipation Bermuda, 1839-46: an advocate of social and economic change", *Journal of Caribbean History*, vol. 9, (May 1977), p. 16; see also as an example the census of 1851 in BB 1850, p. 171.

⁷ St. Clair Drake, *Black Folk Here and There: an essay in history and anthropology*, vol. I (Los Angeles: Centre for Afro-American Studies/University of California, 1987), p. 26.

⁸ From the late 1700s to the establishment of the Anthropological Society of Paris in 1859, attempts would sink into conflict: "'Open the science books: what confusion!'" cried one of these scholars; "'what disorder in the natural history of man! All seem to have given in to the whims of the will... [I]n the skill of classifying the human being, ideology dominates nature, effacing the organism. There are no two scholars in agreement on the number of races, and each yet debates with equal force the issue of the unity and the plurality of the human specie.'" Free Translation. ["'Ouvrez les livres de science: quelle confusion! quel désordre en histoire naturelle de l'homme! Tout semble livré aux caprices de la volonté... dans l'art de classer l'être humain, l'idéologie domine la nature, efface l'organisme. Il n'y a pas deux savants d'accord sur le nombre des races, et l'on discute encore avec une égale force les questions de l'unité et de la pluralité de l'espèce humaine.'"] Gilles Boëtsche and Jean-Noël Ferrié, "L' impossible objet de la raciologie: prologue à une anthropologie physique du Nord de l'Afrique", *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, XXXIII-1:129, p. 9.

⁹ W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 37.

¹⁰ *Collins English Dictionary*, p. 121.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 121.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 1097.

¹³ Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: a treatise on argumentation*, translated by John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 214.

A being, a thing, or a system, if it has within itself the nature of arising, the nature of coming into being, has also within itself the nature, the germ, of its own cessation and destruction.

Walpola Rahula

Introduction

Race and Servitude: The Birth of a Social and Political Order in Bermuda, 1616-1669

It was in the fall of 1656, possibly in Warwick Tribe,¹ that allegedly over a dozen men met secretly to plan what had hitherto been absent from the politics of the colony. As recorded tersely, both in Cyril Packwood's *Chained on the Rock* and in Lefroy's preservations of colonial documentation, an evening was to be selected in which the conspirators were to engage in the "... cutting off and the destroieing the English..."; and they would attempt to take control of the colony. Unfortunately for them, however, things began to fall apart. Three members of their leadership (Black Tom, Black Harry, and another) reported the incident to the authorities and a round up ensued of people accused of leading the conspiracy. One of those arrested was a free 'Negro' named William Force.²

The year 1656 paradoxically marked the fortieth anniversary of another event: the first arrival of individuals classed as 'Negro' and 'Indian'. The year of their arrival was 1616, when the Somers Island Company ship the *Edwin* appeared in Castle Harbour from the 'West Indies', bringing with it one representative of each group. Presumably, both had been taken from the pearling stations in the La Margarita-La Cumana area, off the coast of Venezuela, as the two in question were pearl divers.³ As one modern commentator observed: "La Margarita was one of the favourite places of trade for the French and English corsairs, as well as the

Portuguese slave smugglers."⁴ Other 'Negroes' and 'Indians' entered thereafter, always ahead of controversy concerning the method behind their arrival. Yet, these forty years encompassed a period in which the beginnings of changes in local customs and traditions occurred.

This chapter will be divided into three parts. It will discuss the Bermuda colonial project in its social, economic, and political dimensions. It will then proceed to trace developments from the years of 'first contact' (between 1616 and 1623), to the first major watershed of 1656. It will then follow events beyond the watershed, from the conspiracy and expulsion Order-in-Council of 1656, to the Heydon Proclamation of 1669. What will be argued is that, from the years 1623 to 1656 and 1657 to 1669, a general decline in the rights of a growing number of 'Negroes', 'Indians', and later 'mulattos' occurred. Bit by bit, aspects of 'racial slavery' were added to the 'customs of the country' and were codified into law. Gradually, all colonists came to live in a society that had embraced, as an aspect of its legal tradition, an early Anglo-Saxon version of an 'Ibero- Roman system' of servitude. This process reached its watershed with Bermuda Governor Josias Forster's Order-in-Council (1656), which demanded that free 'Negroes' leave the colony. It reached its summit in 1669 when John Heydon, Governor of Bermuda, declared that as far as the 'customs of the country' were concerned, the systems of racial servitude existing in the islands were fully compatible with Christian teaching and principles.

II. The Bermuda Colonial Project: Social, Economic and Political Developments

Models for socio-economic and political development in Bermuda

Hilary Beckles conceived of a two-fold process in the seventeenth-century development of the English West Indies. The first part concerned the establishment of the plantation system, or the "...emergence of large plantations... clearly designed for large scale production, and the distribution of commodities upon the world market...". The second concerned the 'importation' "...of large numbers of servile labourers from diverse parts of the world- Africa, Europe, and Asia."⁵

Through 'unpacking' this dyad, Beckles revealed some notable features of great relevance. Comprehended under the first half of the dyad, between 1624 and 1625, and in Barbados especially, efforts were concentrated towards finding that appropriate profitable cash crop that could ensure the economic health of the colony. But it is the second half that is most relevant. The labour, argued Beckles, which arrived from England to Barbados during the early years of plantation development, was indentured, with contracts lasting from three to ten years. While this basic structure still obtained, certain features, new to the English labour tradition, were introduced and justified under a tradition of the colonies called the 'customs of the country'. One of these new features included 'property-in-man': a claim of ownership that extended the rights of the receiver of labour, *beyond* contracted obligations, to the body of the servant himself or herself.⁶ Servants were thus treated by law and by some practices as if chattel: to be acquired and

alienated. Beckles contradicted the idea, entertained by some historians, that only a labour contract, and not the body of the servant in question, was being so defined; and it took an example to justify an obvious point:

Common in Barbados was a method that evaluated bodies rather than time. Equiano, an ex-slave, wrote in his autobiography in relation to slaves: 'I have often seen slaves... in different islands, put into scales and weighed and then sold, from 3 pence to 6 pence a pound.' This practice was also used to value white servants. Richard Ligon's descriptive account of such a transaction in Barbados during the 1640s is very informative. On this occasion, a young female was being bartered for a pig. The parties to the transaction obtained the scales and weighed both the pig and the servant for their relative value.⁷

Beckles further noted that 'African' labourers were expensive, especially in relation to English indentured labour. This was, perhaps, occasioned by the English Civil War, which ended in 1646. Monopoly control over the access to this labour enjoyed by the Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese during the seventeenth century made the price paid for these workers high. Fortunate was the planter who had means to kidnap 'Negro' men and occasionally women from Iberian and Dutch captors.⁸

Yet, the idea of 'English' indentured property as the earliest major contributor to the plantation activities of Barbados was a well defended position taken by Beckles. The relative cheapness of this labour allowed planters to gravitate towards the acquisition of the more expensive 'Negro' workers: "...servant labour", wrote Beckles, "was to be used for the arduous preliminary stages of development, and then the planter could '...procure negroes out of the increase...' of the plantation."⁹

Beckles offered Barbados as the centre of his analysis, not only because of its consistent string of documentation, but because "...it set the pattern of

agricultural development in the English West Indies."¹⁰ It would, of course, be incorrect to suggest that all of the features of the 'Beckles model' were found in Bermuda, six or so years before the colonisation of Barbados. What can be suggested is that some of the notable features of the 'Beckles model' or the 'Barbados model' help to explain and anticipate certain features occurring in Bermuda's economic and social development. More to the point, a general pattern described by Beckles located itself in the evolving plans of the Rich family, and specifically those of Sir Robert Rich, the Earl of Warwick.

One speaks of evolving plans to avoid the assumption that the evidence allows one to conceive of a fully formed plan in the minds of the earl, Sir Nathaniel Rich, or even of Robert Rich, awaiting, as it were, the right opportunity to be embodied on the backs of Bermuda's early 'Negro' and 'Indian' populations. The evidence more fully supports a long process of testing and correcting.

A Case study: the Rich Family in Bermuda

The Rich family's involvement in Bermuda began near the inception of the settlement there, when, in 1612, twenty-five year old Robert Rich (the cousin of Sir Robert Rich and the brother of Sir Nathaniel Rich) arrived with the first settlers aboard the *Plough*.¹¹ Robert did not stay long, but returned to England in 1616 to give both his cousin and older brother an enthusiastic report of the potentialities of the colony. Sir Robert Rich had already purchased shares in the Somers Island Company (and therefore, land, as each share corresponded to twenty-five acres in

Bermuda) out of the extensive holdings of Sir Robert Mansell.¹² Robert Rich's favourable and encouraging report about the colony's potentials induced his cousin to purchase more shares; and the latter Robert was only prevented from buying even more by a Company rule that forbade the purchase of more than fifteen shares by any individual investor (or 'adventurer') in the Company.

Yet all rules could be outflanked, and this rule was so side-stepped by the individual Riches acting as a family interest, pooling their talents and resources together. A single factor went to live in the islands, to represent and manage the collective Rich family interest. Thus, *as a family*, they controlled 26 shares by 1619. This dropped to 20 shares by 1623.¹³ It made the group the largest land-owning interest in Bermuda, and thus, the largest share holding group in the Company. Robert Rich returned to Bermuda in 1617 and would serve as a factor for the Rich interests for three years.

It is clear that a search for the most profitable cash crop had been a major concern as one reads the letters of the factor Robert Rich to his brother Nathaniel. Robert had written about fruits brought to Bermuda from the Greater Antilles, and the attempts he and a man he refers to simply as 'my neager' undertook to grow one of them experimentally on the Rich estates as a cash crop. The experiment failed and accrued no profit to the family, as Robert reported; however, both he and the 'negger' were to continue to make a "...tryall of divers and sundry plants."¹⁴

Tobacco was, in these years, to emerge as the cash crop and virtually the colony's staple. It was made to dominate the economy both in land allocation and labour deployment. Moreover, if the colony failed in the early years to be a fully

self-sufficient unit, it was probably due to the type of attitude exemplified by John Dutton, the factor on the Rich estates after Robert Rich's death in 1620. Dutton wrote in 1621 a letter to Sir Robert Rich (by then made the Earl of Warwick) about a cooper who had been seeking to establish a farm on the earl's shares near 'Heron Bay', in Warwick Tribe:

If hee procure it (beinge it is not like to beare tob[acco]), these inconueniences followes. First, my Lord shall be at great charge to supply him [the cooper] and his family over [from England] (haveinge more people than Land already), who, where he fyndes it only fitt for provisions, which he knows already will content him selfe to plant good store of that breed poultry and hope to sell, followe his trayde upon the bye [on the side] which is very gainfull; and thus he live like a little farmer upon his free hould (as it weire); because of theise the undertaker hath no halfe.¹⁵

The mass production of 'West Indy' plants required labour, and the Rich estates all but copy in detail the pattern noted by Beckles. Large numbers of indentured labourers from England were located in relatively great numbers on the Rich family plantations. A list compiled in 1622 (with the aim of determining how many investors in the Somers Island Company were failing to 'supply' their lands with colonists) puts the Rich family among the best 'suppliers' of settlers:

Table 1.-- Suppliers of the Largest Number of Tenants and other Settlers, 1622

<i>Investor</i>	<i>Number of Settlers Supplied by Investor</i>
Rich Family	77
Mr. Rich: Cha[m]berlaine	48
Mr. Farrar	33
Earl of Devonshire	28
Mr. George Smith	27
Mr. Mooror	18
Earl of Pembroke	16

Source: *The Rich Papers. Letters from Bermuda 1615-1646: eyewitness accounts sent by the early colonists to Sir Nathaniel Rich*, Vernon Ives, ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 240-247

According to the editor of the *Rich Papers*, Vernon Ives, this list excluded 'Negroes'. 'Indians' and 'mulattos' were not mentioned. Essex was offered as providing the largest number of colonists;¹⁶ and Essex was, of course, the site of the parliamentary constituency of the Earl of Warwick. These English colonists fell basically into two major groups. The first contained tenant farmers, individuals who owed their investor/landlords, and paid off these debts by remitting to them half of the tobacco crop (an arrangement known then as 'half-sharing'). The other group was composed of indentured servants. They were given seven year contracts to work the land, partly to pay off the costs of transporting them to (and supporting them in) Bermuda.¹⁷ One of the later Rich family factors, Hugh Wentworth, came from this second group. One, thus, is brought to the issue of the 'Negro' and 'Indian' workers, particularly on the Rich estates: and what happened when the pirates/privateers Kerby, Powell, and Ellffryth left more 'Negroes' in Bermuda.

First, the group of twenty-nine brought in by Ellffryth in the *Treasurer* in 1619, were, by 1620, placed on the Rich family holdings. Then something notable happened. A letter of complaint, written by an overseer on the Rich estates (Thomas Durham) was sent to Nathaniel Rich in 1620. It criticised the new factor John Dutton. Durham wrote:

But Mr Dutton, he havinge the commaund of all, tooke largely to maintaine him and this Company, and displace some of your men that were very labourious painfull [painstaking] men of[f] the land which they had felled [felled, cleared] and so to serve his own turne hired negroes, and these men ar non resident.¹⁸

Dutton's reasoning for this is alleged to have been that there were too many men working on the Warwick estates on 'halfes' agreements, and too few servants. Vernon Ives took a guess that Dutton perceived the 'Negroes' as cheap labour: cheap in the sense that they were not contracted to 'half-share' with anyone. Ives also noted that many of these evictions, though occurring to men who were indebted to Nathaniel Rich, were carried out against men located on the Earl of Warwick's lands; and he wondered why Durham had not written his concerns to the earl. Maybe he had: for Dutton in his letter to Warwick in 1620 argued that the evictions were carried out to replace not 'painfull and laborious men' but idle farmers. He sought to replace them with hard working ones. Later, in 1621, he argued (significantly) that though not all of the 'Negro' workers were skilled in the arts of the tobacco culture, they were still "...necessarye hands fore labor...".¹⁹

The idea of the 'cheapness' of deploying 'Negro' labour was occurring to others. When the governor of the colony, Nathaniel Butler, wrote to Nathaniel Rich about the fourteen so-called 'Accidental Negroes' Kerby had brought in ('accidental' in that Kendall, the interim governor of Bermuda, alleged they were 'accidentally' found 'floating on the seas'), he had argued: "...thes Slaves are the most proper and cheape instruments for this plantation that can be..."²⁰.

One could argue that though these events occurred on Rich lands, they need not have reflected Rich designs; but there is more to justify an hypothesis of the earl, particularly, purposely seeking to 'stock' his plantation with 'Negroes' *mostly* from the Spanish West Indies. Dutton in his 1621 letter to Nathaniel Rich,

complaining about the buccaneer Daniel Ellffryth, wrote: " He [Ellffryth] nourses a consept [conceit, idea] my lord [the Earl of Warwick] will give him and his Company their shayres of negros *this next yeere* [1622], which perhaps is the reason the man would inlarge himself". [italics added]²¹ Ives declared that this proves "...Lord Warwick was actively bringing in slaves to work his land."²² Captain William Jackson (subsequent to his attack on St. Jago de la Vega in Jamaica) had in the 1630s, according to Cyril Packwood, "...spent the next seven years, supplying Bermuda with Blacks and Indians on behalf of the Earl of Warwick."²³

The transition to captured 'African labour' was emerging in microcosm on the Rich estates, and the Earl of Warwick emerged as that fortunate planter able to avoid the high prices for enslaved men and women demanded by the Iberians. He was, thus, in a more fortunate position than the Somers Island Company in 1616 when it procured the first 'Indian' and the first 'Negro'. High costs would plausibly act as one factor postponing the mass entry of 'Negroes' and 'Indians'. These economic considerations, particularly connected with the evolving plans of the Rich family, constituted an important context for the introduction of enslaved people into Bermuda.

The constitution of a servile demography

The arrival of the *Edwin* was important in the introduction of 'Negroes' and 'Indians' into Anglo-Bermudian colonisation projects; but the arrivals occurred between 1617 and 1619. These more significant arrivals can be divided into three groups according to the ships they arrived on. The first group constituted an undisclosed number brought in by the buccaneer Captain John Powell in the *Hopewell* during the spring of 1617. This group is significant due to at least one man, Francisco, noted for his agricultural skills. The factor Robert Rich wrote about this man in his letter to Nathaniel in 1618. It is an oft-quoted description:

I intreat you to procure mee a neger whose name is Francisco.
Hee is one [of] the general; his judgement in the cureing of
tobackoe is such that I had rather have him than all the other
negers that bee here.²⁴

Packwood had argued that the statement 'all the other Negers that bee here' was suggestive of "...a sizeable Black population by 1618".²⁵ Given that, outside of the *Edwin* couple, no other large scale entries of anyone classified as 'Negro' or 'Indian' (much less 'mulatto') have been recorded, it seems justified to draw the conclusion that the 'other negars' refers to the rest of the population of the *Hopewell*. Clearly only one of the *Hopewell* group knew how to treat tobacco, a somewhat specialist task; and all probably were Spanish speakers, if one goes by the name of one of them. Where exactly they departed from within the Spanish West Indies remains virtually unknown.

The view of the next group is more obscured. They were the fourteen 'Accidental Negroes' arriving with another pirate, Kerby, in 1619. Eight turned over to the interim governor Miles Kendall. A shroud of mystery hovers over how they came to be in Bermuda. Kerby was a "...notorious Rober...", that is, one "...

serving under noe Comission...", according to one, albeit anti-Kendall, source.²⁶ His victims were found, according to Kendall, "... flotinge on the sease..."²⁷ Ives argued that they were 'West Indian' [read: 'Spanish West Indian'], and Lefroy recorded Captain John Smith as suggesting that Kerby's 'small Barke' left from the 'West Indies' - which, again, implies the 'Spanish West Indies'.²⁸

The last of the three is more notorious, more connected with the Rich interests, and more easily identifiable with regards to origins. This group, numbering twenty-nine, arrived on board the *Treasurer*, a ship belonging to the Earl of Warwick. The vessel was captained by an 'associate' of the earl, the notorious Daniel Ellffryth. It was also accompanied by an unnamed Dutch privateer, a silent partner whose impact on North American social history was tremendous.

The travel trajectory of the *Treasurer* and the Dutch vessel has been part of the controversy surrounding them. The *Treasurer* was sent from England to Bermuda by Lord Warwick and then ordered on to Virginia. This was done; and while in Virginia, Ellffryth, as instructed, met with the colony's governor, a Rich 'associate' named Samuel Argall. The *Treasurer* then left Virginia and disappeared, reappearing nearly one month later at Virginia in a battered condition. It was then accompanied by the Dutch privateer. Stanley Pargellis and Ruth Lapham Butler wrote in 1944 that both shared the "...dubious glory of carrying the first slaves to Virginia...".²⁹ Yet Vernon Ives noted that the new Virginia governor who met them, Sir George Yeardley, refused to allow Ellffryth the opportunity to land, forcing him to take the twenty-nine 'Negro' captives to Bermuda.³⁰ Yeardley was not a Rich faction member. Nonetheless (luckily for Ellffryth), the governor of

Bermuda, Nathaniel Butler, was. Pargellis and Butler added this about the captives left with Yeardly: "These Negroes... became technically indentured servants on reaching Virginia."³¹

The accusation had been levelled that "...the ship (the *Treasurer*) was gone to rob the king of Spayne's Subjects by seeking Pillage in the West Indies that this was done by directions from ...Lord Warwick."³² It was toward this end of exposing the earl that the governor of Virginia, again not a Rich faction member, sought to take an oath that Ellffryth and his company "... had ben robbing the Spanyol in the West Indies...".³³ King James I stood to be both embarrassed and compromised by his subjects engaged in activities of that nature. The British monarch was at that time involved in delicate diplomatic negotiations with Spain concerning the potential royal marriage between his son Charles and the daughter of the King of Spain. An embarrassed and compromised king would have made a powerful ally for those competing with the Rich faction. Hence, the leader of the rival faction, Sir Edwin Sandys, was inspired to report to Spanish ambassador Gondomar details concerning the incident.

Nathaniel Butler, in the midst of the scandal, wrote in October 1620 to Warwick concerning the transfer of some of the *Treasurer* group to the Rich estates. Seven individuals had in fact been taken from "one Youpe, a Dutchman who had bin abroad in the parts..." (Ellffryth's travelling companion) and did not belong to the *Treasurer's* group.³⁴ Butler therefore waited before he transferred them from 'the generall' out of fear that, as the news Youpe's loss was spreading through the efforts of the *Treasurer's* sailors, it would become "...a generall

known thinge here...". It, thus, might have led to problems between the governor and influential Somers Island Company members.¹⁵

Nonetheless, one arrives at a general idea concerning the population of 'Negroes' and 'Indians' living in Bermuda *circa* 1620. There is the impression that more 'Negars' were identified in the population than 'Indians', although increases in the number of 'Indians' were clearly noticeable in the records of the bills of sale from about 1630 to the 1660s. If this were in fact a correct assessment of the demography, it might explain why 'Indians' were not mentioned at all in the *Act to Restrayne the Insolencies of the Negroes* (1623), even though both 'Negroes' and 'Indians' arrived in virtually the same social condition as servants.

There is also no indication of 'mulattoes' either, or at least no one was being identified as such *until* the 1640s. *The Rich Papers* makes no mention of them at all, and while these collections become progressively diminished beyond the early period of 1616-1623, the span of these documents reaches to as late as 1646. Somewhat coincidentally, one of the first individuals described as a 'mollatto', a girl of two years, appears in the bill of sale records of January 1648. She was apprenticed for a term ending at her reaching twenty years of age.¹⁶ Sarah Layfield, however, appears to be the first one recorded as a 'muletto' - that is, as a 'muletto gyrl'. She was eight or nine years of age when she was brought before the Court of Assizes in 1644, for "[f]oolish and dangerous words touching the person of the King's majesty." She was later discharged on the basis of her age.¹⁷

What is significant about these examples is that they were all children, born roughly within the time when the first locally born generation would have been appearing in the colony: between the late 1630s and late 1640s. A prime example

of the first emergence of a locally born 'Negro' and 'Indian' generation was Hanna Samando, who will be discussed in more detail below. She was the 'Negro' child of one of the three men the factor Robert Rich had employed on the 'Heron Bay', Warwick estates of the Rich family. She was recorded in 1636 as having been apprenticed at seven years of age, which would imply that she was born at the earliest in 1629: about ten years after her father settled in Warwick.³⁸

Children generally identified as 'Negro', 'Indian' and 'Mulatto' do not really appear in the bills of sale records until the 1630s and 1640s, and then in somewhat large numbers. They often have English names, irrespective of the possible Afro-Hispanic heritage of their parents.³⁹ Sarah Layfield, specifically, would have been born *circa* 1635, Susan *circa* 1646, and another 'mollatto' girl sold to Jonathan Wood (for a term of four score and nineteen years in 1647) *circa* 1643. This girl, Mary, was recorded as four years of age. Circumstantial evidence suggests that 'mulattos' first emerged as part of the first generation of a local-born population. Significantly also, it was this generation that would have been 'coming of age' roughly at the 'watershed' years, i.e., around the date of the conspiracy of 1656.

Apart from this generation, new arrivals of 'Negroes', 'Indians', and 'Mulattos' occurred. Prevailing opinion, again, suggested a departure from the Spanish West Indies for many arrivals to Bermuda: between 1620 and 1674. Previous to the declaration by the Somers Island Company, in 1674, of an order that explicitly forbade fresh arrivals to the islands, the purchases dominating the bills of sale records were of persons from areas in the Spanish Caribbean. Captain Gyles Marsh's activities in the Caribbean basin, for example, led to the sale of

Sambo and Lucretia to the Bermuda governor Thomas Chaddocke in 1637.⁴⁰ There were raids by mariners, as noted earlier, connected with the Earl of Warwick, and, again, Spanish names appear in the list. Ellffryth was noted to have explicitly assaulted the 'Spanyard' and the 'King of Spaynes subjects', and the activities of William Jackson led, in 1664, to the sale of Gunsallie, Siccotie, and Whan [read: Juan]- all 'Nigros'. They would serve on a limited term basis.⁴¹

Other mariners subsequent to this added to the population of 'Negroes' and 'Indians' from the Spanish regions. Mishall or Michael was an 'Indian man' sold by Captain James Groliere to John Dorrell and Joseph Wiseman in May 1645.⁴² Bazilart de Mirando troco, a 'Negro man', was kidnapped and taken to Bermuda by Captain William James from Santiago de Caracas, Venezuela in May 1658. He was released from his captors upon arrival into Bermuda. His arrival, in 1658, and his subsequent freedom leads one to wonder as to his fate, given that this was a year after the Forster Order expelling free 'Negroes' (promulgated in 1656). Moreover, the immediacy of his release may suggest that he had been captured as a free man from Venezuela. As will be seen, only ten years before were a group of free 'Indian' women reduced to perpetual servitude. This caused the involvement of the Somers Island Company and the discussion of whether 'free born' populations should be reduced to the ninety-nine year indentures.

Toward the latter end of the period, between 1660 and 1674, a greater diversity of origin in the 'Negro', 'Indian', and 'Mulatto' populations is noted; yet, the 'Spanish hegemony' was still maintained in relation to the origins of these people. Some individuals were brought to Bermuda from islands like Jamaica shortly after the forces of the English Protectorate took control of it in 1655.

Anthonie and three other 'Negroes' were recorded as departing from 'Poynt Cagoway/Port Royal' in the bills of sales records (for 1660).⁴³

When a ship, the *Mayflower*, arrived 'from Jamaica' in 1668, sailors sold a 'Negro' girl and an 'Indian' boy along with an 'Indian' man called Andrea in exchange for food.⁴⁴ Popelo, an 'Indian man', brought in aboard the frigate the *Port Royal* in 1668, was accompanied by Anthonie, Lucrezia, Nicholao, Marea, and Whan; and all but Whan were recorded as 'Negroes'. Popelo is significant as he carries his origin in the name given by the record keeper. Popelo was the name of an area in the Yucatan peninsula, "in the River of Somesenta", as the sale papers had noted.⁴⁵

When war arose between the Dutch and English in the 1660s, John Wentworth, the son of Hugh Wentworth, took the initiative and raided the island of Tortola: it had been inhabited by several persons, including one major proprietor and his many slaves. Wentworth's assault allowed him to carry away seventy 'Negroes' and one 'Indian' to Bermuda, all subsequently held by the Somers Island Company officials upon arrival of the group.⁴⁶ Although the majority contained persons with Iberian names (Maria, Augusteene, Whan, Lewes, Tome and Francis), in keeping with the demographic context, several other names, suggestive of an alternative origin, make an appearance among them: Moma, Corabare, and Mosey.⁴⁷

Lastly, the records of slave sales noted the arrival of several 'Indian' women. They had originally been 'free born' and Christian, and sold in Bermuda. Their sale incurred a protest from the Somers Island Company, and is the subject of a later analysis. Their names suggest origination beyond the Spanish-Iberian

complex: Nall, Joane, Barbarye, Elizabeth, Marye, Besse, Megge, Sarah, and Anne.⁴⁸

Thus, by 1674, when the Somers Island Company, in response to the conspiracy of 1673, forbade any further 'importation' of 'Negroes' and 'Indians' (and 'mulattos'), a servile population from mostly the Spanish colonies was living in Bermuda. What all of this meant in the relationship between attitudes and developing institutions can now be examined.

II. Toward the Watershed: 1616-56

Attitudes...

Alden T. Vaughan, in *Roots of American Racism*, quoted Captain John Smith's assessment of colonial policy in the Americas. He prefaced the quote by observing that military men (in which he listed a survivor of the *Sea Venture* wreck, Virginia governor Sir Thomas Gates) tended to operate on combat and warrior assumptions in their approach to American issues. For example, Vaughan quoted Smith as writing: " '[t]he Warres in Europe, Asia, and Affrica... taught me how to subdue the wilde Salvages in Virginia'." His comment suggests a less than sanguinary experience in Africa, and this experience might go far to contextualise some of his disparaging statements about the peoples in (or conceived as from) that continent.⁴⁹ His assertions, nonetheless, were taken as representative of the attitudes of seventeenth-century English colonisers: attitudes allegedly found at the formative juncture of British American history, and at the origin of English 'racial slavery'.

With reference to English opinions of 'Negroes', Vaughan quoted Winthrop Jordan's position that "... 'from the first, Englishmen tended to set Negroes over against themselves, to stress what they conceived to be radically contrasting qualities of color, religion, and style of life, as well as animality and a peculiarly potent sexuality'."⁵⁰ Vaughan himself concludes this point:

Religion and lifestyle are cultural considerations and therefore targets of ethnocentricity, but notions of color, 'animality', and perhaps sexuality are essentially biological, from which racist assumptions could be fashioned. Thus, part of the English bias was ethnocentric- *a perceived cultural difference in kind and quality- while much of it was racist and based on a widespread English conviction that Africans were innately inferior and unworthy of full equality.* [italics added]⁵¹

It is beyond the purpose here to examine, in detail, the theory that earlier pre-colonial English convictions of Africans classed them as innately inferior and unworthy of full equality. This has already been examined, beyond Jordan and Vaughan, by others such as Joseph Washington in his *Anti-Blackness in English Religion, 1500-1800*, and the late St. Clair Drake in his two volume study *Black Folk Here and There*.⁵² What the latter two scholars argued (while agreeing in some points with Vaughan and Jordan) was for a far more chaotic miasma of diverging and conflicting racial opinions and attitudes in the English pre-colonial tradition. Moreover, Drake hinted at an early international context for 'anti-blackness': in particular, the cold and hot wars between European Christians and African Muslims. According to Drake:

...far off wars of the Crusade against the Infidel Muslims had made Moors symbols of the devil for Englishmen as the battle of the Reconquest had done for the Spaniards. There was a tendency to make the equivalence: Satan=Black=Moor. (The Devil was sometimes referred to as 'Mahamet.').⁵³

Drake continued, regarding the colonial period: "'Ethiopians' were recognised as another kind of black person, and were no longer considered equivalent to evil, thanks to Protestant biblical exegesis and the Prester John mythology, but *The Negro* was sometimes given demonic significance nevertheless...[Drake's emphasis]".⁵⁴ Protestant exegesis was at the centre of value formation in the Bermuda colony. Notably, Drake had argued that the divergent form of this Protestant exegesis, Puritanism, coincided with an emerging

British involvement in the trade of human beings, and the growing legitimacy of this trade. He added: "...Middle-class leaders [were]...anxious to protect the morals of the masses- and particularly the women- from 'immoral blacks'."55 These 'middle class leaders' were, in many ways, created by colonial activity, often involved in the trade in human beings, and increasingly dependent on it.

The statement of Captain John Smith, and the allusion to the military concerns of the early leaders of the Virginia colony, might be underscored by the 1622 'Indian' raid on Jamestown. The effect it had in Bermuda on attitudes towards 'Indians' is not clear. Nathaniel Butler's report was presented in 1623, about the time when the second Assembly in Bermuda was passing the *Act to Restrayne the Insolencies of the Negroes*. If the attack influenced attitudes, this influence is not clear in the Act; but an influence on attitudes might be interpreted from the relatively fewer number of 'Indians' brought to Bermuda.

Nonetheless, those examining the Bermudian manifestations of seventeenth-century English *attitudes* have worked within a similar perspective outlined by Winthrop Jordan and Alden Vaughan. Cyril Packwood, for example, argued with regard to 'Negroes' that the "...first Blacks held the same status as white indentured servants. However, their black color and high visibility made them stand out as something different and they were treated as sub-human." He continued: "Their African heritage and glorious ancient civilizations were unknown to European whites, who called them savages." He quoted Angela Davis as writing that the "... 'white slave owners were determined to mould Black people into the image of the sub-human being which they had contrived in order to justify their

actions."⁵⁶ Given that Packwood's work was at the time of its publication the first extended discussion of Bermudian slavery, it is significant that Jordan's perspective should arise in it. Vernon Ives gave his interpretation of the failure of a Bermuda population 'census' of 1622 to give any precise enumeration of 'Negroes':

The fact that here blacks are not counted at all shows the change in their status. In the early days of the colony they were considered indentured servants, especially valuable because of their West Indian and maritime skills. Now they had become 'non-persons' - slaves for life.⁵⁷

But the term 'census' is Ives' characterisation. It is nowhere stated in the record that the type of precise enumeration of the population, as implied by the term 'census', was undertaken by those compiling the listing. Their simple task was to determine whether lands were being supplied by investors. Thus, it might be argued that Ives characterisation warps the view of the intentions behind the compilation of the list. For this reason (and other reasons), the belief that the absence of an explicit counting of 'Negroes' is evidence of deep-seated anti-'Negro' prejudice must be deemed problematical.⁵⁸ It is also worth noting that the enumeration also excluded those "...which are uppon the publick Land...".⁵⁹

One can offer an alternative argument, nonetheless, regarding that 'English' attitudes to 'Negro' and 'Indian' arrivals: that they were somewhat phlegmatic in the early years of colonisation, at what can be called 'first contact' period. The factor Robert Rich, for example, would write to his brother Nathaniel:

Wee have the trew [illegible] plant and good store of neggars which Mr. Powell brought from the West Indies, all which I doubt not but you will have from us good store of Tobaco, which will prove very vendable.⁶⁰

Rich wrote further along:

I have placed my neger & one of my servants on your too first shayres with Wethersby, which [whom] I have removed from the Countesse of Bedfords Trybe. In the respect of the barrenesse thereof, in that I would have them well followed by the negres planting of west endy [West Indian] plants, wherein hee hath good scill [skill].⁶¹

It may be countered, however, that Robert Rich's 'neagor' is never given a name, just a race classification. We know almost nothing of this 'neagor's' personal details; and what does one say regarding the *completed* statement, quoted earlier, of Nathaniel Butler: "For thes Slaves are the most proper and cheape instruments of this plantation that can be, *and not safe to be any wher but under the Governours eye.*"⁶² Bernhard argued that the 'safe' meant 'safe from illicit use' by planters seeking 'cheape' [read: not contracted?] labour.⁶³ Indeed, what proceeds (regarding Miles Kendall's designs on the fourteen so-called 'Accidental Negroes') seems to support her contention.

Regarding the refusal of Robert Rich to give his worker a name other than 'negor', it can be countered that the records hardly suggest a consistency in recording names: either in Bermuda, or anywhere else, for 'neagors' or anyone else. Moreover, servants at this time were often not given last names, regardless of their racial classification. The English servant working with the 'neagor' is also unnamed or simply referred to as "...one of my servants."⁶⁴ One also suspects foreigners suffered the indignity of having their 'unfamiliar' names corrupted or Anglicised or ignored. The incidents of this happening to African names are known: Coffey for Kofi, for example. One suspects this happened to John Wood, the Frenchman hanged for "...speaking many distasteful and mutinous speeches..." against Governor Daniel Tucker. It is doubtful that his original name was Wood, much less John Wood.⁶⁵

Apart from the fact that 'Negroes' arriving in the colony between 1616 to 1623 comprised that type of foreigner, there is this note in Nathaniel Butler's letter to Nathaniel Rich (1620): "For myne owne part, I am every daye [illegible] my hope of silck wormes not can I apprehend [any reasons] why not. I heare my Lord of Warwick hath entertained that French Peter, that first [illegible] brought up a scandall upon [illegible] Mulberry trees."⁶⁶ Rich, incidentally, does name James, Francisco and Anthonye in later letters, and refers to them as men- as all other human adult males were referred to at this time.⁶⁷

It can be argued, thus, that the 'phlegmatic' would *dominate* in 'English' attitudes in Bermuda at least up until *circa* 1623. From that date they continue their steady hardening until 1656: the 'watershed year'. Some exceptions that arise seem to suggest an economic motivation and context, to be discussed in greater detail further along. There is, for example, the passage of the 1647 Act by the Assembly forbidding the baptism of 'Negro' and 'illegitimate' children.⁶⁸ Given, on one hand, the growing importance in expanding the numbers of workers under the longest possible times, and, on the other, the arguably proportional desire of 'Negroes', 'Indians', and eventually 'Mulattos' to escape such reduction, some economic explanation might be offered for the Act.

Then there is the Assize presentment of 1652, in which Henry Gaunt was "...suspected of being unnecessarily conversant with negro women- that he hath given them gifts...". It continued: "...and if he hath not left his familiarity with such creatures, it is desired that such abominations be enquired into, least the land mourne for them".⁶⁹ One suspects the phlegmatic tone was becoming less frequent by the 1650s, perhaps as a by-product of the conflict over the aggressively

expanding servitude times. This is a conflict that matured into the conspiracy of 1656. It is, indeed, at the same Assizes that the Grand Inquest sought to complain about 'aqua vitae' distilled from palm tree products, and the general cutting down of palm trees. "Idle negroes in all parts of the Island", it complained, "cutt most." It continued to observe that what can be argued as a recent introduction of the process of distilling alcohol from palm trees, palm wine: "[b]ut now they [the 'English' colonists] have learned to *destill* yt into *aquavitae* and so for to make more of yt that they now cutt Palmeto trees in *all manner of places...*"[italics in text]). A co-operative business was emerging between 'Negroes' and 'English', toward satisfying what was viewed in the 1600s as stubborn vice among the latter group.⁷⁰

Notable must also be the one 'Negro', 'Mulatto', and 'Indian' response to changing 'English' attitudes. There was the case of Doll Allen, to be discussed later. The petition demanding her freedom in the 1640s, which would describe 'heathen Negroes', noted how she was distinct from them. It was a rare description in the early Bermuda documents of 'Negroes' as 'heathen'. This is ironic, for as this process accelerated, so did the number of restrictions that would ultimately fall upon them and constitute the codified 'customs of the country'.

It has been assumed, furthermore, that early populations of 'Indians' and 'Negroes' arrived out of the Spanish West Indies. The extent to which, either as African or West Indian born, they would have presented cultural values alien or hostile to English colonists is not determined. Such would require a detailed knowledge of the departure points of a majority of the Spanish colony entrants.

The records appear to guard this secret with particular obduracy. Certain assumed features would have produced hostility: Spanish speech (which only a few colonists may have been in a position to understand); and 'addiction to the Superstition of the Church of Rome.' With these, one might suspect moments of English apprehension producing hostile reactions. But the absolute silence from the records regarding these alleged characteristics leads one to assume that if they existed (and it is more than highly plausible that they did) they were not issues at the earliest years of 'confrontation' - i.e., before 1623.

Yet, regardless of what the English thought of the 'Spanyard' and certain aspects of the culture in Spain, this culture was not unfamiliar to many of them. Men like Daniel Ellffryth spent much time traversing the Caribbean in plunder or *rescate* trade; and this might explain why traditional terms of abuse often heaped upon 'Indians' and 'Negroes' elsewhere did not emerge in Bermuda. With a few English colonists, it was possible for some aspects of Spanish popular culture to have been familiar and desirable.

Nonetheless, the movement by 'Negroes' and 'mulattos' toward some form of cultural assimilation began virtually at the beginning of inter-cultural 'confrontation'. One example is of one of the three 'Negroes' located on the 'Heron Bay' shares, called James 'the Neggar'. Like Symon 'the Negro', and Francisco the tobacco curing expert, and Anthonie, he has no recorded last name before this point. This is notable as the surname he eventually was recorded as having was Spanish. This leads one to speculate that 'Samando' was previously his first baptised, and therefore Roman Catholic and Christian name. Within ten years of his arrival, he was 'free' and, as was customary with free people, he was

recorded with a surname- this surname. This becomes a family name, and hence, the last name of his daughter Hanna. Presumably, both regarding himself and his family, the acquisition of James as a new Christian name, a name found among the 'English' colonists, might suggest *new* membership within the Protestant Church.

Parakitto and Kathalina had, in 1649, given common 'English' names to their children: Alice, John, Judith, and Sarah. They named one child Henry, perhaps after the master of Kathalina, Henry Foard.⁷¹ This seems more than clearly to reflect concerns toward baptising servant children, which, as will be seen, created political problems for proprietors, at least until 1669. Hannah Bestaina followed more closely the Samando pattern. She was, in 1663, already a 'free' woman- a freedom under threat, but free nonetheless. Her last name, variously recorded Bestaine or Bestaina, is notable as, in its first form, it is connected with the Iberian culture.⁷² One can speculate on how she received it and why she kept it; however, she, like Samando, used it as a surname upon her 'freedom'. Her children would be called Patience and Mary. There, again, is the implication of an insistence toward baptism behind these naming acts.

Finally, Roger, the son of 'Negro' servants Lewis and Maria (the name Lewis probably a corruption of Luíz), carried the first name of the Governor's Council Secretary (and later Bermuda governor) Roger Wood. Wood had secured a limited contractual arrangement for his namesake in the 1640s.⁷³ The 'Negro' Roger was a young child then and was 'freed' by 1654, earlier than contracted. Upon his freedom, he took his father's first name, Lewis, as his surname.⁷⁴ Roger Lewis, however, would probably not enjoy this freedom for long as the Forster expulsion order was only two years later. Significantly, Roger's earlier contractual

agreement required that he be taught by John Stowe, a boat maker, in exchange of providing his labour to Stowe.⁷⁵ This was a normal request within the boundaries of the indentured servant contract, and his parents through it could expect to have their child more systematically exposed to the cultural habits of the English. What is significant is that there were attempts by not a few 'Negroes', 'Indians', and 'Mulattos' to remove items that could inspire cultural conflict between themselves and the English colonists.

Toward the watershed: definitions of freedom and servitude between 1623 and 1656

It is obvious that the terminology of the *Act to Restryane the Insolencies of the Negroes* (1623) offered one singular class of 'Negro' to whom disabilities applied: 'the Negro servant'. It begged the question as to whether there were other classes of 'Negro'. Two broad classes now emerged after 1623: that containing those free from all servitude; and that containing those still bound to service. Within the latter, three sub-groups emerge, almost chronologically, and therefore reflective of the declining rights in relation to increasing service 'times'.

The first was the class of apprentices (individuals almost always children) who provided service under the guise of learning a trade, in exchange for the 'instruction' and some resource provisioning. It was to last until some stipulated age in adulthood. This was, of course, a widespread institution in England. It made

its first appearance in Bermuda when the Somers Island Company decided to solve labour shortages by sending 100 children from the slums in London.⁷⁶

Although it is not clear whether 'Negro children', if there were any, were engaged as apprentices before 1623, it is not too difficult to find them afterwards. Hanna, the free 'Negro' daughter of James Sarnando, is the most obvious example: she had been given as an 'apprentice' to Hugh Wentworth in 1636. She is notable not only for her place among the first generation of 'Negroes' born in Bermuda, but also for the fact that she was born free. The 'ceremony' in which the elderly James Sarnando turned his daughter over to Hugh Wentworth and his wife (paradoxically referring to Hugh Wentworth as 'master' in the process) has been offered as evidence of his freedom and the freedom of his family.⁷⁷

Tho./Thomas and Susan, 'mallattoes', reflected the more standard example of apprenticing in Bermuda, occurring in 1648 and 1649. Thomas was to be raised by a cooper, and to learn his trade. Susan, who was only two years of age when she was turned over to the governor, Thomas Turner, was to be 'apprenticed' until she was twenty. If this had been followed, she would have expected to enjoy her freedom during the 1660s, and specifically in 1666.⁷⁸ Moreover, many of those within the system of apprenticeship, born of the 'entrant generation', would have expected to realise the end of their terms in the late 1650s or 1660s, the years of the greatest change in the rights of many 'Indians', 'Negroes' and 'Mulattoes'.

The second group composed that class of individuals given ninety-nine year indentures. They appear to have emerged in the colonial records for the first time as early the 1640s, when a 'Negro woman' called Maria was sold by Hugh Wentworth to Richard Wallet of Sandys for a "...terme of foure score and nineteen

yeares...".⁷⁹ Given the nature of Wentworth's relationship with the Earl of Warwick, it can be speculated that this manoeuvre between perpetual servitude and *de jure* indentured servitude involved the earl. The ninety-nine year indenture may have arisen as part of a general concern that the servitude 'times' of especially certain 'Negro' servants were diminishing. Declining 'times' presented more than just a problem over the continued access to their labour, but influenced the price of any servant. One could demand more for the labour (and body) of a servant if one were able to sell that servant with the longest times allowable under law.

Christian scruples, however, did restrict the application of the ninety-nine year indenture. Two years before the expulsion of free 'Negroes' was ordered, a letter had been sent to Governor Josias Forster from the Somers Island Company. It concerned freeborn 'Indians' who were sold in Bermuda:

...that wheras ther were taken by deceit & brought unto the Somr Islands by Capt Preston & others about 11 years past 30 or 40 Indians which were free born people And ther made perpetual slaves to the great dishonr of God & the pulling down his judgmt on the Inhabitants to the preuidice of the Company that some course may be takn for restoring of this Free borne people to their formr liberties.⁸⁰

Although they were sold for four score and nineteen years, they were seen as 'perpetual slaves' by the Company: the ruse of the ninety-nine year indenture was, in essence, seen for what it was *de facto*. The complaint itself actually originated from a group of local colonists, though the Company was quite prepared to take it up. But its strictly religious and moral attitude was probably in proportion to its interests. None of these 'Indians' were from the 'colony' lands, but in the hands of private persons whose tobacco quotas had to be met, regardless. "And wee doe asuer your that yt is farr from our purpose to take awaye", it continued, "the servant of any man to whom any service doth belong of right, but in our care

to relieve the oppressed & to execute Justice, wee are ready to do that hath bin propounded unto us in a business tending soe much as is alledged by the propounder to the glory of God & the honor of the Company."⁸¹ What is important is that a scruple had existed against the 'perpetual enslavement' (or reduction into a condition of 'perpetual enslavement') of persons *born free*. This haunted the question of slavery in Bermuda, even as late as 1669.

Finally, there was the sale, in 1645, of an 'Indian boye', Tomackin. The child was sold to John Wentworth, the son of Hugh Wentworth, and was the earliest recorded sale of an individual under the terms of lifetime servitude.⁸² Hence the third group of lifetime servants emerged through the efforts of the second generation of colonial settlers. Subsequent to that year, in 1649, a 'mallatoe boye' was also sold as a lifetime servant.⁸³ Tomackin was similarly sold, for the second time: by John Wentworth to John Trimmingham on February 10, 1650.⁸⁴ It was during the same year that Quicke and Black Bess were also sold into perpetual servitude. They had been brought into the colony from New England.⁸⁵ These would be the types of sales that would predominate over, and then replace, the ninety-nine year indenture during this period. The latter would be substantially accelerated in the aftermath of the conspiracy of 1656.

An important context for the changes occurring in servile conditions during this period lay somewhat outside Bermuda. As Beckles noted, the ongoing project to find the suitable staple crop in Barbados had finally reached the experimentation with sugar cultivation and the establishment of the industry in the late 1640s. This process was helped as planters from the Portuguese colony of Brazil fled to Barbados and other places, bringing in the technical skill associated with this

industry. Yet sugar demanded much, particularly in labour, and Beckles commented on the high cost of 'Negro' labourers as compared to the labour fleeing Britain at the outset of the Civil War. 'Negroes', he had noted, could be purchased 'out of the increase of the plantation'.

The implication here is of a high cost of procuring 'Negro' labour and the heavy demand for that labour causing increases in the prices of 'Negro' labour; that this was experienced not only in Barbados but elsewhere in the English Caribbean. Something of a 'Barbados effect' might have resonated through the markets of Bermuda, occasioning there increases in prices:

Table 2.--Prices of 'Servants' in Bermuda, 1642-65

Year	Name	Race	Sex	U	Service length
	Elizabeth	'Negro'	girl	11	N/A
	Hanna Sarnando	'Nigroe'	woman	30	99 years
	Jane	'Indian'	woman	9	99 years
	Maria	'Indian'	woman	9	99 years
	Sander	'Nigro'	man	14	N/A
	Elizabeth	'Indian'	woman	20	99 years
	Peeter	'Negro'	N/A	23	99 years
	Anne	'Indian'	woman	13	99 years
	Tomackin	'Indian'	N/A	20	natural life
	Sara Fernando	'Negro'	woman	17	natural life
	Ciscilly	'Indian'	woman	12	99 years
	Peter	'Negro'	man	20	natural life
	Lucea	'Negro'	woman	20	natural life
	Tomakin	'negro'	man	23	natural life

Sources: Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, *A Calendar of Early Bermuda Deeds and Other Entries in Bermuda Colonial Records, 1618-1680*, Peter Garrod, ed., passim; Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, Bermuda Colonial Records II, vol 2, PA 2129 Helen Goeling, transcr., passim.

It is clear that for all but one 'Negro' man, prices increased by between £6 to £9. Hanna Samando's high valuation may have been a result not just of her young age, but experience as a 'maid' in Bermuda. Again, the coincidence between these increasing prices, the increasing 'times', and the socio-economic changes in the Caribbean is notable.

Towards the Watershed: changing rights of 'Negroes' and 'Mulattos'

The *Act to Restrayne the Insolencies of the Negroes* was adopted on May 28, 1623 as part of a group of laws passed by the second Island Assembly. Specifically, it noted:

...if any negroe shall hereafter weare any weapon in the day tyme, or knowne to walk abroad at any undue houre in the night tyme or any other tyme or tymes go out of the way into any lands in the occupacōn of any other p.son than the land of his Mr that then the Mr or owner of such negroe shall from tyme to tyme make full recompense to the p.son grieved for the value of all such things as the Negroes or any of them shall purloyne steale or grable, or any other hurt or damage by them done.⁸⁶

Corporal punishment was to be inflicted upon the 'said Negro'. It was further and finally decreed "...not to be lawful for any negroe to buy or Sell, barter or exchange for goods tobacco or other thinges whatsoever, without the knowledge and consent of his Mr or the good and Tobacco he tradeth for upon pains of punishment aforesaid."

Nonetheless, there are several interesting aspects about what Cyril Packwood, quoting Wesley Craven, declared to be the first Act of the first English colonial era aimed especially at 'Negroes'. One is obvious in the name: *The Act to*

Restrayne the Insolencies of the Negroes. 'Indians' (and 'mulattos') are not named. Again there might have been so few persons defined as 'Indians' in the colony that they escaped much notice. It is notable that the list of suppliers of settlers noted above (compiled in 1622) makes *no explicit mention of either at all*, whereupon it does note persons defined as 'Negroes'.⁸⁷ This may well have been the result the over-identification of 'Negroes' with tobacco and sugar plant cultivation, and the desire to satisfy a resulting local demand by bringing in more of 'Negroes' than 'Indians'. The second aspect of the Act concerns the circumstances surrounding it. But this requires a slight digression.

The *Act to Restrayne the Insolencies of the Negroes* constituted the second major set of laws passed by the colonial Assembly. The Assembly itself was the result of a policy to involve Bermuda settlers in law making. It was a project first suggested for the colony by Thomas Smith, the governor of the Somers Island Company; but it would be his successor, Edwin Sandys, who would take the credit for executing its development.⁸⁸ Nathaniel Butler was given the task by the Company, as the colony governor, of organising the first assembly meeting. There could be few men more enthusiastic than Butler: indeed, it came to be a predominating concern with him.⁸⁹ Moreover, while he hoped that the experiment would not fall victim to the usual in-fighting and 'cockpit politics' of the quarterly sessions, he was also concerned that the new group of Bermuda burgesses would not use this dispensation as an instrument in their battles against the Company investors.⁹⁰ It can be said with justice, in fact, that Butler inaugurated another political tradition: colony governors reminding Bermuda Assemblymen of what

their rights were as legislators, and how far gubernatorial instructions allowed them to go. As was written in the *Historye of the Bermudaes*:

He endeauoured, therefore, by all meanes to divert it, and to possesse the burgeoises with the vanities of it, and the impossibilitie of doing any good that way... to whom also, to the same end, he shewed the particular instruction that he had received from the Company in England, concerneinge the holdinge of this assembly...⁹¹

As stated, it was through this second exercise of participatory legislating that the *Act to Restrayne the Insolencies of the Negroes* was produced. This second Act of Assembly, under the leadership of a different colony governor, reflected new local concerns and not those of the 'common colonist'. The right to constitute the 'assembly', either by membership or voting for a representative, was reserved to those who owned land: an exclusive right that would continue as late as the 1960s. Many in the colony's then 1,500 person strong population were not landowners. Many were labourers, the large minority (700) assigned to the 'common land'.⁹² Not surprisingly, then, the grievances noted in the Act of 1623 sound like grievances of landowners:

Whas the Inhabitants of the Somer Islands doe complaine and present unto this honoble and graue assemblie, that the negroes who are servants to divers p.sons inhabiting in theise Islands, havinge bene negligently looked unto, and suffered to goe abroad in the night and other unfitt tymes haue committed many trespasses against us the inhabitants aforesaid, as stealinge of piggs potatoes, poultrye, and other fruit and thinges to the great losse and damage of several p.sons who cannot possible haue recompense at their hands....⁹³

What is of greater contextual importance, as it relates to the theme of this discussion, is that it occurred within a welter of rules and restrictions imposed on especially the landless populace in the colony: for example, rules restricting 'vagabondage' and tenancy complaints. There is, generally, a suggestion in the body of the Acts passed by the second 'assembly' of growing social contradictions

in the colony: those between 'free' and 'indentured', and 'propertied' and 'propertyless', now added to the off and on conflict between the overseas adventurers and the local colonists.

This leads to the third question of context: a possible growth of an internal market that provided a profit to 'Negroes'. Cyril Packwood noted that this Act of Assembly was just one of a series of laws placing restrictions on the commercial activities of 'Negroes'. This point is clear when one examines the *Act Against the Ill Keepinge of the Ferry* (1623). This Act was seeking to restrict the commercial use of the ferry, but controversy seemed to float around this service. Previously, according to Wilkinson, Nathaniel Butler had tried to subsidise the ferry, through taxes, to ensure its regularity. Then it was controlled by private hands.⁹⁴ Packwood argued that 'Negroes' in particular were earning a lucrative profit sailing persons from 'Bailey's Bay' to St. George's on Sundays. As there were some 'Negroes' then living on the 'public land', one can with justice also conclude that they, in essence, ferried persons from St. George's to Bailey's Bay; and that the Bailey's Bay to St. George's trip was often a return journey for them. The Act that emerged was ostensibly aimed at servants profiting from providing ferry services, but as that would have then necessarily included 'Negroes' (and plausibly 'Negroes' living on the 'colony land'), the effect of the Act went beyond its expression. It became illegal for 'Negro' servants, and other servants, to operate it as a trade for private profiting; and the profits earned by them through this were called 'extortionate'.⁹⁵ Other Acts would be passed, after the watershed year of 1656, as shots in a long war toward controlling, when not destroying, the commercial activity of 'Negroes'.

This first early attempt formed the last line of the *Act to Restrayne*, and can be quoted:

Last of all that it shall not be lawfull for any negroe to buy or Sell, barter or exchange for goods Tobacco other thinges whatsoever, without the knowledge and consent of his Mr for the goods and Tobacco he tradeth for, upon pains of punishment aforesaid.⁹⁶

Of course there may be the suggestion that so-called stolen goods were being sold to others for a profit. Yet what is more important is the desire to put control of the buying or selling of any goods in the hands of proprietors. One could wonder about why there was the need to legislate responsibility until one realises that all sales must now occur with the 'master's' consent. It was to prevent proprietors from competing against their indentured servants for the profits generated from the sale of goods grown on the proprietor's land at the proprietor's expense. If that constituted the 'problem', the legislation, if effectively enforced, would have had the effect of closing down the competition and ending a 'haemorrhaging' of profit.

III. Beyond the Watershed, 1656-1669

When the conspiracy of 1656 was discovered, renewed designs for the restriction of 'Negroes' took form in an Order-in-Council of Governor Josias Forster. Promulgated on November 6, 1656, it, among other things, expelled the free 'Negroes' from Bermuda. William Force, along with "... the rest of the free Negroes..." had already been given the option of exile to the island of Segatoo in the Bahamas.⁹⁷ The Forster Order declared:

It is likewise ordered that the negroes that are free men and woemen shalbe banished from these Islands, never to returne eyther by purchase of any man, or otherwise, vpon payne of forfeiting ther said purchase in that case.⁹⁸

This had the intention of repairing one type of loophole created when the *Act of Restrayne* was passed in 1623: the absence of restraints on free 'Negroes'. It, in this instance, simply sent those who were in Bermuda out of the colony, and left only 'Negroes' who could be managed by the code in an uncomplicated manner. Thus, all 'Negroes' had to ensure that they had tickets giving them right to mobility; and they were restricted to their masters' homes at night. All had their trade either severely controlled or denied them.

Moreover, the Order sought to remove a particular group of people who, in 1656, might have appeared to have provided support to the 'slaves' in the colony. This is notable with regards to one person, William Force. No case could have been made against him; and his free status gave him some protection against the arbitrary deployment of executive (or proprietor) power. The Somers Island Company might easily have felt the need to defend William Force as a free man: it,

indeed, was within the living memory of local government officials that the Company came to the defence of the group freeborn 'Indian' women reduced to the ninety-nine year indenture. It could still be argued that the initiative for the conspiracy of 1656 came almost entirely from the 'Negro' servants, with the case against the free 'Negroes' never clearly established. Indeed, there was no convicting evidence against William Force, either by his own confession, or by the testimony of others; and one has sufficient ground for wondering whether he was even involved in the conspiracy.

One suspects that the motives behind the Forster Order lie beyond the issue of security. What one does know about William Force, if nothing else, is that he was a means for justifying the legal removal of free 'Negroes' from the colony: that the Forster Order generally sought to *legally* reduce to perpetual servitude the only 'Negroes' still free. It was a watershed in the pattern described above of establishing the greatest and longest control over 'Negro' labour: to be 'Negro' was, in 1656, to be reduced to *some type of servitude*.

The legal distinction between 'Negroes', and 'mulattos' and 'Indians' became more evident in the codes promulgated between 1656 and 1663. It is worth noting that the Forster Order did not place any restrictions on 'mulattos' or 'Indians' who were servants unless, with regard to the Act restricting commerce, they were already relegated to lifetime servitude. Free 'Mulattos' and free 'Indians', of course, like those defined as 'whites', were not allowed to trade with 'Negroes and other slaves'. Yet 'Mulattos' and 'Indians' were not subject to banishment upon gaining freedom.

Sanctions increased when fears of an 'Irish-Negro' Conspiracy emerged in the 1660s. Although no existence of a conspiracy was ever demonstrated, declarations that exiled 'Irish' rebels and 'Negroes' were conspiring together to wipe out the 'English' were sufficient to lead Governor William Sayle to issue an Executive Order. It outlawed 'Negroes' and 'Irish' meeting together: any two or more Irish or two or more 'Negroes' so doing were to be whipped. It appears that some 'English', at least, were not about to bet their lives that 'deep-seated and pervasive' 'Irish' antipathies towards 'Negroes' would prevent such an alliance.⁹⁹

Governor Florentia Seymour convened the General Assembly in January 1662/3. It would pass a series of untitled measures that extended the scope of earlier proscriptions. What is notable is that these new measures named 'Mulattos' and 'Mustees' explicitly as the subjects of control:

Wee the Gen^l Assembly haueing receiued seu'all Complaints of the insolent carriage of negroes molattoes & musteses, haue enacted &c for the time to come That any such p.sons as *count themselves ffree because no p.ticler masters claymeth their seruices, yet in iudgments are not ffree to all nationall priuiledges...*¹⁰⁰ [italics added]

"If any such persons shall carie and behaue themselues mutinous or proudly against his Maiesties Subiects..." the body of measures continued, "... after conuiction of the same... [it] shalbe lawfull for the Gouvernor & Councell to subiect them to the seruice of the Colony or perpetuall banishment."¹⁰¹ It also placed restrictions regarding trade by ordering punishment for "... any person or Inhabitant of this Island [who] shall Trade commerce or receive any Tobacco goods or merchandise from any negroes, molattoes or mustees without note or order under his mastr or mistresses hand..."¹⁰² It further restricted the mobility of

these 'Negroes', 'Molattoes', and 'Mustees', "...finding...", as it put it, "...evill events of Negroes, Molattoes or Mustees walking abroad on nights and meeting together, notwithstanding many Proclamations made for restraint."¹⁰³

All of those whose times of servitude had expired (persons characterised by the measures as "any negroes molattoes or musteses, that haue bin heretofore seruants to any of the Inhabitants, and are now out of their times and not ffree by the Lawe of our nation referring to Aliens...") were to have "... noe further priuiledge then [sic] to stay one year and then immediately to depart if the opportunity present, or otherwise to become Colony seruants for euer."¹⁰⁴ This was an effective repetition of laws regarding 'Negroes'; but, significantly, it did not comprehensively banish *all* 'mulattos' and 'mustees'- and it did not *explicitly* concern free 'Indians'.

Indeed, it, and the Act it was contained in, begged three questions regarding those 'molattos' and 'mustees' (and 'Indians') not apparently covered by the prohibitions. Were they considered 'His Majesties Subjects'? Was this an attempt to stem the flow of persons joining the ranks of 'His Majesties Subjects'? Were they absorbed into the class of the 'English' population, constituting what later would become the group classed as 'whites'? It seems plausible to tentatively answer all three in the affirmative, particularly as the phrase "...haue enacted &c for the time to come..." leaves one with the distinct impression that the measures concerned future cases, and not ones which had emerged before the passage of the Act of Assembly.

But these questions open up the general issue regarding intimate relations between racial groups. Heretofore, not a few of 'his majesty's free born ['English']

subjects' had contracted marriage, or at least formed unions, with persons defined as 'Negro', 'mulatto' and 'Indian', and this would be a persistent tradition in Bermuda's social history. The possibility, whatever the motivation, of intimate relations between 'Negroes' and 'English' was noted in the case of Henry Gaunt. There was also the case of John Davis, who attempted to marry Penelope Strange in 1660. Strange was a 'mulatto' owned by the Somers Island Company, and Davis a 'white' mariner. Davis was given permission to wed her on condition, among other conditions, that he provide, in the place of their offspring, a 'negro child' for the Company as compensation.¹⁰⁵

Much later, between 1695 and 1722, roughly eleven women were brought before the Justices of the Peace for having children of men who were either 'Negroes', 'mulattos', or 'Indians'. Courts tried to increase the scale of punishments: from 39 lashes 'well laid on naked back' (for each member of the offending couple respectively) to ninety-nine lashes 'well laid on the naked back' (for the men convicted).¹⁰⁶ Legislators appended new illegitimacy codes to old race separation clauses, specifically dealing with interracial pairing: at least pairing between 'white' women and 'black' men.¹⁰⁷ When the Court of the Justice of the Peace was confronted, in 1703, with a 'white' Ann Robinson and her 'black' child, it decided for a dramatic didactic punishment against her and the child's alleged father, a 'Negro' man called Dick. Robinson was tied to the doorpost, stripped to her waist and whipped on her naked back 'well laid on' in front of the justices and bystanders. Dick was stripped totally naked, and placed so Robinson could have a clear view of him. Tied to the doorpost, he was lashed fifty-one times "...severely laid on."¹⁰⁸

It is very likely that all of these relationships were the results of a combination of factors: declining 'white' male numbers (as will be noted, a dominant feature of eighteenth-century demography) and the stubborn traditions of a society late in promulgating racial codes. But the overriding reason is far more mundane: it lies in the daily interactions of human beings, working and living intimately with each other in the face of attempts by a political elite to legislate racial-caste prejudice. Thus, the racial codes passed by the Assembly in 1662/3 can be viewed as the first attempts at putting an end to these types of intimate relations:

And bee it further enacted &c That if any of his Maiesties ffree born subiects, hee or shee shall presume to mary with or have *commerce* with any negroes, molattoes or mustees, then after conviction they are to be subiected to the colony or be banished.
[italics in text]¹⁰⁹

Again, this prohibition was part of the code which sought to regulate the number of 'Negroes', 'mulattos', and 'mustees' at the end of their times of servitude. Perhaps intermarriage with (and thus assimilation into) the community of 'free born subjects' was consciously pursued by newly 'free' 'Negroes, 'mulattos' and 'mustees': as an extension of their bids to freedom. What is clear, nonetheless, is that, from that point forward, no unions were to occur between those classed as 'His Majesties Freeborn Subjects' (whatever this meant 'racially') and *any* 'Negro', 'Mulatto', and 'mustee'. But it said nothing with clarity about earlier marital contracts; and again, it said nothing about 'Indians'.

One commentator argued the point that while laws were passed, they were also violated; and very little effort, as she put it, was ever invested by the

government in enforcing its codes. She specifically cited the 1660s body of laws against 'insolence' as an example of this: "... 'Notwithstanding many Proclamations made for restraint...' suggests that local officials were somewhat lax in their law enforcement duties- a suspicion reinforced by the wording of the rest of this act: 'Bee it enacted &c That all and every such p.sons soe offending, not having a ticket from their masters or mistresses shall be whipped, and all magistrates and inferiour officers that after complaint made, shall neglectt the execution of the same, shall forfeit...Ten Shillings...'. She saw this as an example of the relative indulgence of Anglo-Bermudian colonists to the behaviour of their servants.¹¹⁰

There is some merit in this position, but a slightly differing viewpoint might also be pursued: an opinion of an event from another place and time provides one way to illustrate this viewpoint, and offers in part a useful analogy to seventeenth-century Bermudian circumstances. Hannah Arendt, the German-American political philosopher, once made the point concerning the legislative process that could easily be applied to law-enforcement. Describing the early 1930s in Germany, of what she called the 'Fool's Paradise' (between the year of the Nazi take-over of the government and the new government's first experimentation with the various 'solutions' to the 'Jewish problem'), she observed:

...the Nuremberg Laws were felt to have stabilized the new situation of the Jews in the German Reich. They had been second class citizens, to put it mildly, since January 30, 1933; that almost complete separation from the rest of the population had been achieved in a matter of weeks or months- through terror but also through the more ordinary connivance of those around them...Now, the Jews felt, they had received laws of their own and would no longer be outlawed.¹¹¹

She quoted one Zionist observer who had declared: "...[l]ife is possible under every law. *However, in complete ignorance of what is permitted and what is not one cannot live*'." [italics added]¹¹² The latter statement may be a hyperbole, but it captures something of the nature of the problem with regards to Bermuda. Unregulated law-enforcement always haunted the projects of 'Negroes', 'mulattos', and 'Indians', and caused the extra-legal to invade the space left by inconsistency. Some could violate a code and live in a 'fool's paradise' until, for some reason, the law entered their lives in a sudden and disruptive way.

Hannah Bestaina, introduced earlier, had been a free 'Negro' woman in Bermuda for at least five years beyond the Forster Order of 1656. But she found herself needing to leave the colony for an undisclosed period. The reasons had nothing in themselves to do with the expulsion order, but she found herself having them as an element in the question of the care of her children during her absence. Because of the expulsion order, it would have been legal for planters, desirous for cheap 'Negro' labour, to slip her children into the conditions of permanent servitude and 'property-in-man'. She made an arrangement that her two girls, Patience and Mary, be given to Sibbila and William Righton on April 19, 1662 to work as 'apprentices', possibly in the belief that the contract would provide them with some form of protection while she was away. She was, however, in essence if not in word, obliged to return, and when she did, she was thus under agreement to

surrender her free status and work for the Rightons forever. One could plausibly guess what would happen to her children if she refused to return. Yet the agreement stipulated that she certainly could not live if 'absolutely free' in Bermuda as a 'Negro'. Neither could her children.¹¹³

When John Forse (a probable relation of William Force) contracted a debt to a man named Burroes, he was obliged to pay off this debt by repairing the Burroes' house and "...following his trade as a cooper until the debt is paid." Forse was a free 'Negro' man according to the records, and although superficially this looks like an indulgence (it was a time-limited apprenticeship) it follows the spirit of the Order of 1656. Forse was obliged to revert *from* his free status into that of an apprentice, in conformity with the law. Moreover, the question begs as to whether he would have ever been liberated from his apprenticeship after his debt was paid, as the agreement allowed. The Forster Order or its enforcement, to borrow a phrase from Cyril Packwood, would hang like a 'Sword of Damocles' threatening his condition of freedom.¹¹⁴

At the Summit: the Heydon Order of 1669

During the decade that coincided with the beginning of the Restoration in England, a generation of persons classified as 'Negro' was emerging into conditions different from those which greeted 'first-contact' period 'Negro' and 'Indian' entrants. Attitudes were no longer 'phlegmatic', the Roman system had entered Bermuda, and increasing numbers of 'Negroes', 'mulattos', 'mustees' and 'Indians' were finding themselves working as 'perpetual servants' in the colony. Certainly, from the watershed year of 1656, virtually all 'Negroes' were obliged to servitude, a servitude that always had an unstable barrier between itself and perpetual service. Moreover, codes of a racist nature emerged which sought to outlaw an earlier tradition of interracial sexual intimacy, and codified the existence of a class distinct, qualified as 'his majesties freeborn subjects'.

Sir John Heydon arrived in Bermuda as governor in the year 1669. His importance particularly lay in the final resolution of the 'Christian servant problem' that was shaping reactions against the emerging racial codes and servitude conditions. Seventeen years before his arrival, in October 1652, the 'Christian servant problem' had been invoked to challenge the changing status of one woman. Doll Allen, possibly a 'mulatto' (it is never recorded how she was classed) petitioned, with her father's assistance, the Somers Island Company that she be delivered from 'reputed perpetual service'.

Allen, through her father and other Christians, had been exposed, though not necessarily converted, to Christianity during her childhood. It was upon reaching adulthood that somehow she was taken from her father's care, and "...reputed a perpetual slave..." to an unnamed party. Hence, the word 'slave' made

another rare appearance into the early documentation. It was probably to highlight what the writer saw as an injustice done to Allen. Interestingly, the argument the petitioner offered as justifying her release was that her "...ffreedome...[was]... due to her ffather's right..." and that "...it hath pleased God to set a distinction between her and the heathen negroes by prudentiallie allotting her birth among Christians and making her free of the Ordnances of Christ."¹⁵

Lefroy had felt, slightly beyond the Allen predicament, and concerning the baptism of 'Negroes' (especially in lieu of the 1647 law forbidding it), that a hesitation always emerged. It was attributed to "...a touching superstition, never eradicated entirely from the minds of the slave population, even down to the time of their emancipation in 1834- that by rite of baptism they became, or at least had a right to be free. It had, of course no legal basis, and it did not prevent a zealous clergy from baptising them."¹⁶ Given what controversies emerged regarding, for example, both the 'free born' and Christian 'Indians' and Doll Allen, it requires not much of a cognitive leap to imagine why such a 'touching superstition' would arise; and this is beyond the realisation that the laws of the period seemed neither to affirm nor deny the legality of such custom or practice.

Nonetheless, in the year of Heydon's arrival, the issue emerged again. Earlier that year, George Garret had been overheard talking with a group of 'Negroes' about what he felt were arrangements under development to 'free' them. Richard Leacraft had overheard him, and confronted him in front of his listeners. He then proceeded to report the incident to the Governor's Council, and the case was adjudicated three weeks later. The fashion in which the Council descended upon the hapless Garret supports the view that expressions of disquiet from

'servants' were ringing in the ears of local planters. Moreover, there might have been some sympathy for them arising out of 'his majesties freeborn subjects'. This point is defensible when one remembers that the codes imposed by the government (such as those prohibiting intermarriage, and restricting mobility and commerce) would have complicated the lives of many in the caste of 'English subjects'. This would explain why some 'English subjects' might not have enthusiastically enforced codes of the Council and the legislators. It is also worth recalling that only those from among the class of proprietors (beyond the Somers Island Company group of investors) could constitute and fill these two branches of government.

Garret was thus to be made an example of: he was ordered, by majority of votes, to be lashed twenty-one times at a Pembroke whipping post after the Sunday evening sermon; and throughout his ordeal, he was to have displayed on his body a sign reading "George Garret Censured to be whipt, for falslie reporting that the native Negroes are to be freed by the Kings Majesties Comand."¹¹⁷

Later, in the fall of that year, Reverend Samuel Smith had become concerned about "...whether hee may procede to Baptizeing of Molattoes, Indians (and more especially) Negroes or not."¹¹⁸ The Council took a position of avoidance, critical if, one suspects, Smith was hearing 'Molattoes', 'Indians' and more especially 'Negroes' articulating the view that Christianity was incompatible with what had been happening since 1656. It is also clear that, with regard to 'Negroes', obviously the law forbidding 'Negro'-child baptism had somehow lapsed. The critical silence from the Council might have been part of what emboldened a group of 'perpetual slaves' to submit a petition to the Council.

Going one step further, they demanded that they be granted liberty by virtue of their religion. John Heydon responded a few weeks later with the reasoned "A Proclamation in Answer to the Negroes Petition Tending to their Liberty & freedom".

Heydon first gave his understanding of the servitude emerging in the 'American plantations' as regarding "...[purchases] ...without condition or Limitation...". He mostly avoided the rhetoric of terming this explicitly as 'slavery', *generally* preferring the terms 'bondman' and 'servant'.¹¹⁹ He then proceeded to outline the duties of his 'servant' upon which he used as his source, strategically and predictably, biblical scripture: specifically, the oft-quoted letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians, St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, and St. Peter's statement on obedience. The last is notable not simply in defining the type of allegiance a servant owed his master, but what a citizen owed to a ruler or king.

Hence, Heydon declared 'servants', especially, owed obedience not just to their masters but to him as governor. They were to obey the decrees of his predecessors by virtue of the royal sanction and authority that supported them. Clearly, this was meant for more than just the 'servant', but it also meant that any disquiet over, and violation of, the evolving racial codes (among other laws) was positively unchristian.

Thus, in answer to the question attending the previous Smith query which the Council had left open, those who had been baptised "...should not thereby think themselves more free from their masters or Owners, but rather by the means of their Christian profession, obliged to a more strict bond of fidelity and service." Heydon summed up his position: "... all persons professing Christianity would be

careful in the discharge of their duties, living in feare of God, and in due obedience to his Majesties..."; if such, "...complaints of this nature would be prevented, true religion and civill conversation would be encouraged [then] the service of God would be esteemed the greatest freedome."¹²⁰ He gave some advice, through scripture, to masters: "... in the same Chptr it is written to them thus masters doe the same things unto them for bearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in Heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him...".¹²¹

Given what has been said of the evolving nature of servitude especially in Bermuda, the whole presentation, for all its logical rigour, would never, post-1662/3, be embodied in the relations between the colony's masters and 'servants'. Several conspiracies on the one hand (one during his administration), and the expanding codes and customs against 'servants' on the other, were hardly productive of the harmonious world of Christian slavery Heydon imagined. Yet, the edict put official closure to the issue that was an essential element in the emerging 'customs of the country'. It expressed, that is, executive (and metropolitan) support for these customs, support which may have been unclear earlier.

Conclusion

The use of watersheds to temporally mark the establishment of seventeenth-century race and servile traditions is not without its problems. It gives the impression of customs and attitudes suddenly coming into existence around historical events. The history of early colonial Bermuda's racial and servile codes is better characterised metaphorically by the filling in of a jigsaw puzzle than the building of a layer cake.

Yet, the compensating virtue of the 'watershed', worth the price of its cosmetic incongruity, is the obvious order it gives. It clarifies processes occurring around the watershed dates. It also links important events to each other. For example, the conspiracy of 1656 can be connected to the phenomena of an increasing number of persons obliged to work for life or for ninety-nine years. Both the conspiracy and the increasing servitude times provide a context for changes in attitudes and *a fortiori* for other changes in the 'customs of the country'.

The years of 'first contact', from 1616 to *circa* 1620, saw the absence of racial discriminatory laws, and the presence of more or less phlegmatic *local* 'English' attitudes to 'Negroes' and 'Indians'. It is true that the chaotic miasma of Prester John, Othello, black devils and Muslim antagonists, among other symbols, must be considered before determining the shape of race/ethnic predilections in the Americas. But these influential predilections could only emerge at the point of socio-economic contact between the 'English' on one side, and the 'Negroes' and 'mulattos' on the other. Those who invested in and/or colonised Bermuda did so for the purposes of personal enrichment: they conceived of the colony as the means

to create or expand their fortunes. Much depended on the success of their investment.

Experimentation with the Iberian plantation system created a formula that required cheap and plentiful (and expert) labour. But it set off a slow evolution of resentments when law and practices developed to keep this labour cheap and plentiful. The events of 1623 and 1656 suggest major turning points in these developments.

Thus, the generation of the 1650s and 1660s grew up in a world of new and restricting 'customs of the country' governing race and servitude. Many who grew up on the other side of the watershed year of 1656 entered the 1700s and influenced succeeding generations of resisting bondservants. The discussion of acts of resistance executed by them and subsequent generations can now be undertaken.

Endnotes: Introduction

¹ The term 'Tribe' was used to designate parochial boundaries in Bermuda's early documentation. When used in this parochial context, the initial 't' will be capitalised.

² Cyril Packwood, *Chained on the Rock: slavery in Bermuda* (New York: Eliseo Torres, 1975), p. 142; *Memorials of the Discovery and early Settlement of the Bermudas or Somers Islands 1515-1685*, edited by J.H. Lefroy, vol. II (Bermuda: Bermuda Historical Society/Bermuda National Trust, 1981), pp. 94-7.

³ Kenneth R. Andrews, *The Spanish Caribbean: trade and plunder 1530-1630* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 178; Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 2.

⁴ Andrews, *The Spanish Caribbean*, p. 78.

⁵ Hilary Beckles, "Plantation Production and White 'Proto-slavery': White Indentured Servants and the Colonisation of the English West Indies, 1642-1645", *Americas*, XLI (July 1, 1985-April 1985), pp. 21-2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹¹ Henry C. Wilkinson, *The Adventurers of Bermuda: a history of the island from its discovery until the dissolution of the Somers Island Company in 1684* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 90.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹³ *The Rich Papers. Letters from Bermuda 1615-1646: eyewitness accounts sent by the early colonists to Sir Nathaniel Rich*, edited by Vernon Ives (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 241-5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 233-4. Ives explained: "There would be no tobacco to divide; the cooper would produce only food and barrels (which the island desperately needed!). Here Dutton is as rigid in his thinking only of the money crop as were the Adventurers themselves." *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁶ Wilkinson, *The Adventurers of Bermuda*, p. 94.

¹⁷ Virginia Bernhard, "Bermuda and Virginia in the Seventeenth Century: a comparative view", *Journal of Social History*, vol. 19:1 (1985), p. 62.

¹⁸ *The Rich Papers*, p. 212.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 233.

²³ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 60.

²⁴ *The Rich Papers*, p. 59.

²⁵ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 3.

²⁶ *The Rich Papers*, p. 125.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 123; *Memorials of the Discovery and Early Settlement of the Bermudas or Somers Islands, 1515-1685*, compiled and edited by J.H. Lefroy, vol. I (Bermuda: Bermuda Historical Society/Bermuda National Trust, 1981), p. 147.

²⁹ "Daniel Ellfryth's Guide to the Caribbean, 1631", Stanley Pargellis and Ruth Lapham Butler, editors, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1:3 (July 1944), p. 174.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 274; *The Rich Papers*, p. 150.

³¹ "Daniel Ellfryth's Guide to the Caribbean, 1631", p. 274.

³² *The Rich Papers*, p. 148.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

³⁶ BCR II, PA 2129, 152/146.

³⁷ *Memorials of Bermuda*, I, p. 565.

- ³⁸ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 4.
- ³⁹ BCR II, PA 2129, passim.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 6/4.
- ⁴¹ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 64; BCR II, PA 2129, 113/104.
- ⁴² BCR II, PA 2129, 120/110.
- ⁴³ Bermuda: Bermuda Archives. *A Calendar of Early Bermuda Deeds and Other Entries in Bermuda Colonial Records, 1618-1680*, Peter Garrod, ed., p. 455.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 537-40.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 542.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 531. Lefroy quoted documents suggesting sixty-seven 'Negroes' were taken by Wentworth: "At a Councell Table 31st Julie 1665...Capt John Wentworth...having lately arrived and brought in with him as small Vessell (his prize) and 67 Negroes." *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, p. 231; see also, *ibid.*, pp. 225, 230-4.
- ⁴⁷ *A Calendar of Early Bermuda Deeds*, pp. 499, 505-14.
- ⁴⁸ BCR II, PA 2129, 124-135.
- ⁴⁹ Alden T. Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism: essays on the colonial experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 110.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 162.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., p. 163.
- ⁵² St. Clair Drake, *Black Folk Here and There: an essay in history and anthropology*, vol. II (Los Angeles: Centre for Afro-American Studies/University of California, 1990) pp. 271-292; Joseph Washington, *Anti-Blackness in English Religion, 1500-1800* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1984), passim.
- ⁵³ Drake, *Black Folk Here and There*, p. 273.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 273.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 286.
- ⁵⁶ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 6.
- ⁵⁷ *The Rich Papers*, p. 240.
- ⁵⁸ Dr. A.C.Hollis-Hallett, private communication. The title of the list states its intention: "Shares Occupied When Governor John Bernard Arrived... A Note of all the shares that are supplied in the S. Ilands Anno 1622 immadiatlle before the arrivall of Capt Barnard." See *The Rich Papers*, p. 241.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 244.
- ⁶⁰ *The Rich Papers*, p. 25.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., p. 59.
- ⁶² Ibid., p. 229.
- ⁶³ Virginia Bernhard, "Beyond the Chesapeake: the status of Blacks in Bermuda, 1616-1663", *Journal of Southern History* LIV:4 (November 1985), p. 552.
- ⁶⁴ *The Rich Papers*, p. 59.
- ⁶⁵ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, p. 134.
- ⁶⁶ *The Rich Papers*, p. 223.
- ⁶⁷ See *The Rich Papers*, pp. 81-2, specifically Robert Rich's letter to Nathaniel, March 1618. He gives a list of all "...such men that are now resident uppon your [Nathaniel's] land in Southamptons Trybe...". It includes Hugh Wentworth. At the bottom of the list appear "Franciscoe, Antonye and James the negger."
- ⁶⁸ Bernhard, "Beyond the Chesapeake", p. 559.
- ⁶⁹ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, p. 30.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 28.
- ⁷¹ BCR II, PA 2129, 176/171.
- ⁷² It all too closely approaches the Spanish word '*bestia*', pronounced '*bestja*' in which the virtually liquid '*i*' could have been heard as '*ni*'. The word translates in the English language 'beast' or 'animal' - as, for example, from '*bestia de carga*' or 'beast of burden'. *Collins Pocket Spanish Dictionary*, Mike Gonzales, et al, eds. (Glasgow: HarperCollins), p. 39.
- ⁷³ BCR II, PA 2129, 176/171.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., 255/246. The date of his discharge from service was November 20, 1654.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 176/171.

⁷⁶ *The Rich Papers*, p. 240.

⁷⁷ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 4.

⁷⁸ BCR II, PA 2129, 153/149, 152/147. Susan was recorded as "... born at Mr. Smith's house...". This might be Henry Smith, the man who turned Thomas over to the cooper.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 44/38. The year was given as 1640.

⁸⁰ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, pp. 54-5.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁸² BCR II, PA 2129, 191/187.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 185/181. The 'Mallato boye' was John, sold on January 22, 1649 by Amis Middleton to Matthew Lowe. It was for "...as longe as boye's life...".

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 192/187. He was sold for 20li for a term expressed as "...duering the said Indian's life."

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 185/180. Both were children. Quicke was described as a 'Negroe boye', Black Bess a 'Negroe girle'. They were sold by New England mariner Samuell Scarlett to Bermuda Provost Marshal John Stowe for "...soe longe as they live...".

⁸⁶ *Memorials of Bermuda*, I, pp. 308-9.

⁸⁷ *The Rich Papers*, pp. 240-5.

⁸⁸ Wesley Frank Craven, *An Introduction to the History of Bermuda* (Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Museum Press, 1990), p. 134.

⁸⁹ *The Historye of the Bermudaes or Summer Islands*, edited by J.H. Lefroy (London: T. Richards, 1882), p. 191. Craven, on this point wrote in a footnote: "If there is any further need to refute the long accepted view that Sandys' enemies were opposed to representative assemblies, the requisite evidence, in so far at least as one of the most influential of his foes is concerned, is found in a letter of Lewis Hughes to Sir Nathaniel Rich of February 1620. Governor Butler, he reported, was exceedingly anxious 'to have such an assembly as your worship spake to him of, ...'. Craven, *An Introduction to the History of Bermuda*, p. 134.

⁹⁰ Wilkinson, *The Adventurers of Bermuda*, pp. 131-2.

⁹¹ *The Historye of the Bermudas*, p. 191.

⁹² *The Rich Papers*, p. 240.

⁹³ *Memorials of Bermuda*, I, pp. 308-9.

⁹⁴ Wilkinson, *The Adventurers of Bermuda*, pp. 193-4.

⁹⁵ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 7.

⁹⁶ *Memorials of Bermuda*, I, p. 309.

⁹⁷ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, pp. 94-5. This was on November 2, 1656. According to the proceedings examining the conspiracy of 1656, the 'Free Negroes' had "... besought the Gouvernour that they might be banisht to that Iland rather than to the Indias, w^{ch} request his... worship wth his counsell did condescend vnto. And [they] were afterwards shipt awaie in the 'Blessing' bound thither."

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁹⁹ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 143.

¹⁰⁰ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, p. 191.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 191.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 141. The presentment at the Court of Assizes (in December 1660) regarding the ruling read: "John Davis a mariner is permitted to marry Penelope Strange one of the Companys molatto women upon condition that every other child born of the marriage shall be the property of the Company- reserving to the said Davis the right to put in a negro child in lieu of any one of those so falling to the company; and also to use any means he may to the company for the procuring of Penelope's freedom: but in the interim he is to pay 40^s per annum for her wages."

¹⁰⁶ UK. Bodleian Library/Duke Humphreys Room, University of Oxford. *Courts of the Justice of the Peuce, Proceeds of the Quarter Sessions, 1689-1724. Bermuda alias Somers Islands in America*, MS RAWL. C.710, pp. 67, 148, 185, 246, 355, 440, 450, 483, 494, 958, 974, 1012, and passim.

¹⁰⁷ See Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *Acts of Assembly Made and Enacted in the Bermuda or Summer-Islands* (London: John Baskett, 1738), p. 89.

¹⁰⁸ *Courts of the Justice of the Peace*, p. 185. Italics, that is, in Lefroy's transcriptions of the original.

¹⁰⁹ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, p. 190.

¹¹⁰ Bernhard, "Bermuda and Virginia in the seventeenth century", p. 64.

¹¹¹ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil* (New York: Penguin, 1992), p. 40.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹¹³ *A Calendar of Early Bermuda Deeds*, p. 466; *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, p. 165. It is notable that the contract was recorded between Hanna Bestaina and Sibbila Righton. Sibbila was serving as her husband's representative, but the agreement itself involved both Rightons. Sibbila signed her full name. Bestaina wrote her last name as 'Bestaina'. That Hanna Bestaina signed her name might indicate that she was literate.

¹¹⁴ *A Calendar of Early Bermuda Deeds*, p. 490.

¹¹⁵ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, pp. 34-5.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 291-2.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

PART I

THE ERA OF VIOLENT AND REVOLUTIONARY RESISTANCE

'Opinion governs the world, and the moment the Negroes shall lose their opinion of the Superiority of the White Man, the authority of the White Man will become precarious.'

Quoted by Elsa Goveia, in
*Slave Society in the British
Leeward Islands*, p. 25.

Chapter II

The Broader Contemporary Context, 1700-1764

Introduction

With the historical context examined, the question arises as to the nature of the contemporary context: the circumstances emerging between 1700 and 1764 that shaped the resistance of the first era. The predominating event in this contemporary context was the two-fold emergence of the enslaved merchant sailor and the enslaved African. Both classes were identified as essential to pre-1764 resistance. But to understand the relationship between these classes and resistance, some explanation must be given to the nature of Bermuda's economy and society. This necessitates discussion of such phenomena as the 'maritime revolution', the peculiar composition of the servile community during the 1700s, and the emergence of female demographic majorities.

The political climate, beyond these two classes, is also important. Within the broadest meaning of politics (as is used in this thesis), it is conceived in this chapter as extending from the relationship between the metropolitan government and the colonists to the relationship between proprietors and bondservants. This climate provided for resisting 'Negroes' and 'mulattos', *inter alia*, resentments that could be exploited and dangers that had to be neutralised.

This chapter begins the approach to the violent and revolutionary events of the 1700-64 period from the most peripheral point of the contemporary context,

and covers what are called the 'broader circumstances' surrounding these acts of resistance: it begins with a study of the socio-economic background; it examines demographic issues; it analyses the declining relations between local and metropolitan leaders; and it concludes with a look into the arsenal of political weapons available to eighteenth-century proprietors.

I. The Social and Economic Background

'Slowed growth and economic stagnation'

There appears to be agreement among historians about the condition of Bermuda's economy during the years of the 'maritime revolution'. Jack P. Greene, in discussing both Bermuda and Bahamas, argued:

...[b]ecause of their small size and their unsuitability for the production of sugar, both Bermuda and the Bahamas achieved socioeconomic stasis fairly rapidly. Tobacco, the principal product of Bermuda during the first two generations of settlement, ultimately proved unable to compete with that grown in the Chesapeake and was being abandoned by the 1670s and 1680s... Although a few people seem to have made surprisingly large fortunes neither Bermuda nor Bahamas offered enough economic opportunity to attract immigrants and enable many to people to acquire much wealth.¹

Cara Harbecke-Metz in an article for the *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History* arrived at a similar conclusion. Indeed, her intention was to

use eighteenth century probate inventories of St. George's to test Greene's hypotheses. She offered the view that there was some consistency between the facts derived from the evidence and the conclusions drawn by Greene:

...architectural research appeared to reflect the findings of the research on probate inventories showing that Bermuda achieved a high degree of material wealth early in the eighteenth century, when the economy seemed promising. Once the Chesapeake began profiting from tobacco and the island of Bermuda became overpopulated and crowded, the economy could no longer grow and while privateering and trade may have allowed some people to maintain wealthy estates, the overall picture is one of slowed growth and, indeed, stagnation.²

She predicted that data arising from further archaeological investigation would be interpreted to support Greene's position. Elaine Forman Crane, although expressing doubt about the utility of probate inventories,³ appeared to agree with the two propositions. She quoted a pamphleteer who had, in 1732, observed that Bermuda "... 'which was formerly one of the most fruitful is now worn out: And such will be the Fate of all small Islands where People increase as fast and so consistently keep their lands tilled.'"⁴ Crane further hinted at resource-concentration, at least as it related to land. Controversial Governor Richard Cony, she noted, had complained in 1685 that "... '[t]he poorer sort have not land to till, the Rich ones [having] engrossed all into [their] hands.'"⁵

Two ideas emerge out of a synthesis of these positions: the gradual economic stagnation starting at some point early in the eighteenth century;⁶ and the involvement of trade as a factor leading to the accumulation of wealth for a few maritime merchants (the creation, that is of a materially privileged class whose wealth was derived in part from maritime commerce). It seems useful to test these propositions against the documentary record, and to examine the demographic context for these economic events.

The reports of Governor John Pitt on many things are somewhat vague. This was also the judgement of Governor Alured Popple, Pitt's immediate successor. Concerning his observations on the state of the economy, Pitt had declared that he was unable to procure "... an Exact account of the Annual produce..." of the colony beyond conjecture, and he determined the value of local produce to be around £2500, shipping excluded. The sale of locally produced palm tree plait to the London market was accounted a significant export. Other than this sale of plait to Britain, Pitt could report absolutely "...no other considerable produce or manufactures..." exported from the colony.⁷ Only onions, in 1731, could be sold to help offset the balance of payments deficits- deficits incurred through trading with especially the North American colonies. Little revenue resulted:

...some small quantities of corn and other provisions are annually produced here and some onions Cabages and Oranges but none for many years Shipped off except Onions which are yearly exported but not so many as amount to any Considerable value.⁸

He continued: "The vessels here have been formerly freighted from hence with pineapples Cabages and Oranges but they have far above twenty years been Scarce and some times are not to be purchased at any rate."⁹ This assertion would seem to offer *circa* 1711 as the watershed year of economic decline, if one reduced economic decline purely to the production of agricultural goods. Yet given the South Sea Bubble depression in England, which had its beginning *circa* 1720, and its obvious effects on British international trade, it would seem wise to see the downturn in the local trade as beginning around 1720. The result of economic depression, argued Pitt, was emigration: with persons taking their families out of the colony for their 'better support', as he put it.¹⁰

The economic conditions of the colony improved slightly by the late 1730s and early 1740s, but there was still a depression in one aspect of the overseas trade. The trade of plaited goods (notably hats) had, by 1739, completely ended. The cause of this Governor Alured Popple located in the preference among English women for the 'Leghorn' hat over the Bermuda-plaited hat. "Was platt to be esteem'd again in England", Popple argued, "It would be of great Consequence to the Trade of these Isl:^d. But its Use depends upon Fashion altho' Hats are now made here in the same Manner, as Leghorn Hats, are as Light, but much stronger."¹¹

Yet, upon his arrival as governor, Popple was in a position to report to the Lords of Trade and Plantations of the re-emergence of an agricultural and manufacturing economy. Cedar trees, oranges, lemons, aloes, cabbages, oil, cotton, Indian corn, potatoes, barley and livestock were classed as commodities; and with presumably, manufactures, they were exported per year at a value of £1500. The plaited goods industry, of which he wrote so dismal an obituary, had been replaced by the manufacture of ships: "Ever since the English Ladies have preferr'd the Use of Leghorn Hats, to those of Bermuda Platt, the Trade of these Isl:^d has consisted of the Building of Sloops, from the Burthen of 100 to 200 Tuns."¹² He noted also the sale of ships built in Bermuda, with these at £3500 of value when exported per year:

Sugar Canes, Ginger & Cotton are produced here, and are at least as good as any of the other Isl:^d can produce: Sugar has likewise been made here as good; And I have the pleasure to acquaint your Lord:^{sh} that we have now many Acres of Canes planted & in great forwardness. Some of the Gentlemen of the best Fortunes, are embark'd in this undertaking. And they have sent for overseers from the other Isla:^d Coppers & Mills. I flatter myself I shall shortly be able to give your Lord:^{sh} a very good account of this undertaking.¹³

However, nothing much appears to have developed from these projects. More to the point, in spite of optimistic developments, Pitt's unspecified yet pessimistic assertions about the purchasing power of Bermudian exports seemed nearly as justified for the period of Alured Popple's government. According to Popple the total value of exports (admittedly higher than the £2000 value Governor Pitt had calculated of exports) was £7000, including the sale of ships. Ship sales composed just under half of the total value of exports, at £3500.¹⁴ Still, the value of imports generally was well above that of exports: £12000 to £7000.¹⁵ Popple could counter that the distress attending this was mollified by the local practice of renting sloops out to colonists in North America.¹⁶ Nonetheless, the small increases in economic production and purchasing power were not enough to remove a continuing balance of trade crisis.

It is thus safe to surmise that the general condition of the local population appears to have been one of relative poverty, with a diminution in the colonial revenue beginning at least after 1710. Even the much vaunted 'plait industry' had vanished long before 1740.¹⁷ The bulk of the overall export trade still depended on agricultural and local production, which by themselves were not able to offset the value of imports. Arguments for a generally static economy, in spite of the maritime revolution, seem justified.

Structure of the 'black' demography

It can be accepted that from the turn of the seventeenth century the tendency of those enumerating the local population was to view 'Negroes' as the

numerically preponderant group of 'non-white'. The extreme of this tendency is offered by eighteenth-century and very early nineteenth-century census records. Governor Pitt, among others, could record only two types of people in the colony in 1731: 'Blacks' and 'Whites'. It is curious as other records certainly mention 'non-Negro' classifications throughout the 1600s, 1700s, and 1800s, such as 'Indian' and 'mulatto'/'coloured', 'mustee', 'quarteroune'¹⁸ and even 'Madagascan'.¹⁹

It can also be noted that as the century progressed the boundaries of the class of 'Negro' seemed to have expanded, though some 'boundary cases' were recorded as belonging to two racial groups. The case of Sarah Bassett may be the most prominent example of this: she was recorded in the 1712 and 1730 Justice of the Peace and Assizes court records respectively as a 'mulatto';²⁰ yet in 1731, when the cost of her trial for poisoning was presented in an audit of expenditure, she was returned as 'Negro Bassett'.²¹ Two boys, one named Joseph and the other Sam, both owned by John Jauncey of Sandys Tribe, were recorded by Jauncey in his will as 'negro or indian' (Oct. 14, 1726). The context of this is notable, for also recorded in Jauncey's will are two adults: a 'Negro man' called Tony and an 'Indian woman', Doll. This was probably a family, in which case the confusion regarding the classification of the two boys is possibly explained.²² Much later, in the 1740s, the Reverend John Horton's inventory listed a 'Yellow Negro' named Jane.²³ It is, of course, possible that skin colour was not highly important in the determination of 'Negro' throughout the period, and as such reflected the lack of concern about establishing boundaries among 'non-whites'. This is in spite of the fact that these boundaries had had a strong influence on the rights one enjoyed.

It suggests that although most modern commentators accept a 'Negro' numerical predominance in the population, none are in a position to offer quantifiable evidence supporting this until the nineteenth century *Slave Registration Register* lists. It is only through referring to bills, bonds, and proceeds records, allied with the books of wills and inventories, that some quantification can be carried out; but this is obviously problematical as the bills, bonds and proceeds are unrepresentative and fragmentary, as are, according to Elaine Forman Crane, the collections of wills and inventories.²⁴

Examining the internal structure of the 'black' population, however, highlights some notable features. It seems that within the community of 'black' people and enslaved 'black' people during the eighteenth century, most were Bermudian. Philip Curtin provided evidence in support of this contention from statistics on the importation of slaves. He suggested that for the period 1616 to 1834 (presumably), roughly 5000 so-called 'imports' arrived in the colony—approximately twenty-two persons per year:

...these colonies and the British Virgin Islands were almost entirely non-planting areas and therefore lacked the intense economic push that would bring in large drafts of slaves and consequent natural decrease.²⁵

No analysis of the origins of local slaves was ever carried out until the 1800s, when three slave registration censuses were prepared. From the 1821 tabulations, the overwhelming majority were noted as Bermudian (compatible with the Curtin hypothesis) with foreign slaves accounting for under 10%. Roughly 150 Africans were determined to have been in Bermuda. This fits the population profile of the eighteenth century, given that the conditions shaping each period's demography hardly differed much as they concerned the enslaved.

The causes of this Bermudian-creole predominance were given by Curtin; but contemporary observers also had ideas on the subject. One opinion arose from Governor Alured Popple, writing to the Lords of Trade and Plantations in October 1737. He was responding to a series of instructions sent by the Board regarding the importation of slaves. He replied these were "...entirely useless..." because "...the Inhabitants of Bermuda are known to purchase no Negroes, either from the African Company or Others; Many slaves are exported from here but none are imported to Bermuda."²⁶

Yet the key word in the discussion might be 'importation'. It implies that this excluded privateering captives and the slaves brought into Bermuda by immigrants. Thus, although his assertion might be accepted as broadly accurate, it was just too extreme and absolute. It is further undermined by its appearance as hearsay: "...the Inhabitants of Bermuda *are known* to purchase no Negroes..." [emphasis added]. Indeed, given what Popple had to say about smuggling, one might feel justified in asking whether any governor was in a position to be confident of his knowledge of slave importation. If Governor Pitt was vague about the structure of the local demography generally it might have had less to do with gubernatorial lethargy than to what may have been 'realistically' possible to calculate.

The second feature of the 'black' demography concerns the issue of a 'black' adult female majority. Sex ratios for 'black' adults and children, from 1721 to 1768, reveal a pattern of female numerical predominance in the adult population, as expected; yet, the population was heavily boy-predominant among the children for each year save 1727 and 1739. Indeed, in 1727, the population of

'black' boys extended beyond the population of 'black' women: there were 1158 boys to 945 women. There were 987 'black' girls.²⁷

Table 3. —Population of Bermuda according to Race and Sex, 1699-1768

YEAR	BLACK MEN	BLACK WOMEN	BLACK BOYS	BLACK GIRLS
1699	566	649	N/A	N/A
1721	817	965	880	852
1727	787	945	1158	987
1739	898	1083	871	933
1749	869	1219	1017	875
1756	1149	1569	1151	1031
1762	1287	1564	1288	1085
1768	1208	1429	1214	1034

Sources: Elaine Forman Crane, "The Socioeconomics of a Female Majority in Eighteenth-Century Bermuda", *Signs*, 15:21 (Winter 1990), p. 237; CO 37 6, p. 146; CO 37 12, p. 10; CO 37 18, p. 128; CO 37 13, p. 189.

Given the artisan focus of the colony, and the male monopoly of the trades, this demographic bias within the child population was a very convenient state of affairs for proprietors. Older apprentice boys, apart from their future potential as artisan men, could still bring in wages for their owners; hence, they gave proprietors extra sources of income.

Nonetheless, the greatest period of demographic bias toward women relative to men appears to have emerged during the inter-war period, from 1749 to 1756. It shaped the black male/black female sex-ratios: 90 females to 100 males in 1749, but 88 males to 100 females in 1756. There had been 71 'black' men to 100 'black' women in 1749, rising only to 73 'black' men to 100 'black' women in 1756.

Table 4.-- Sex Ratios for 'Black' Adults and Children

Year	Adults	Children	Adults and Children
1721	.85	1.03	.93
1727	.83	1.17	1.01
1739	.83	.93	.88
1749	.71	1.16	.90
1756	.73	1.12	.88
1762	.82	1.19	.95
1768	.85	1.17	.98

Source: Elaine Forman Crane, "The Socioeconomics of a Female Majority in Eighteenth-Century Bermuda", *Signs*, 15:21 (Winter 1990), p. 237; CO 37 13, p. 128; CO 37 6, p. 146; CO 37 13, p. 189; CO 37 12, p. 10.

The cause of the imbalance, occurring within this unlikely context of an inter-war period (i.e., of no privateering raids) takes the discussion back to the cause of population growth within the 'black' community. But some other demographic features must be noted as a prelude to it. One can begin by taking eight pairs of years, from 1721 to 1764:

Table 5.— Increase/Decrease of Population in Bermuda by Race/Sex, 1721-56**1721-1727**

Year	Black women	Black Men	Black Boys	Black Girls	White Men	White Women	White Boys	White Girls
1721	965	817	880	852	1558	1596	1072	1013
1727	945	787	1158	987	910	1768	1261	1131
Increase/ decrease	-20	-30	+278	+135	-648	+172	+189	+118

1727-1739

Year	Black women	Black Men	Black Boys	Black Girls	White Men	White Women	White Boys	White Girls
1727	945	787	1158	987	910	1768	1261	1131
1739	1083	898	871	933	1618	1825	1058	968
Increase/ decrease	+133	+111	-287	-54	+708	+57	-203	-163

1739-1749

Year	Black women	Black Men	Black Boys	Black Girls	White Men	White Women	White Boys	White Girls
1739	1083	898	871	933	1618	1825	1058	968
1749	1219	869	1017	875	1593	1736	1090	871
Increase/ decrease	+136	-29	+146	-58	-25	-89	+32	-97

1749-1756

Year	Black women	Black Men	Black Boys	Black Girls	White Men	White Women	White Boys	White Girls
1749	1219	869	1017	875	1593	1736	1090	871
1756	1569	1149	1151	1031	1826	2130	1317	1098
Increase/ decrease	+350	+280	+134	+156	+233	+394	+227	+227

Source: Elaine Forman Crane "Socioeconomics of a Female Majority in Eighteenth-century Bermuda", *Signs*, 15:21 (Winter 1990), p. 237; CO 37 18, p. 128.

Between 1727 and 1756 there was a steady increase in the numbers of

'black' women recorded in Bermuda. Occasionally, this occurred when there was an appreciable decline in the population of 'black' girls, as it had been in the pairs of years from 1727 to 1749. It was between these years that the greatest expansion in the 'black' population occurred. Indeed the largest group increase between 1749 and 1756 occurred within the population of women: 'black' women (+350); and 'white' women (+394). If one accepts the position that natural increase was the only factor causing this increase in the numbers of women, one must then accept that of the 875 'black girls' in 1749, 350 became women in 1756, and a further 506 were added to the 'black girl' population through birth;²⁸ and all of this within a brief space of seven years. It would seem more plausible and commonsensical to credit *some* of these increases to importation of 'black women' (alongside the importation of 'black' boys), and again the context of immigrant 'whites' bringing in their slaves, of smuggling and of privateering captures can be used to support this.

Thus, some evidence that foreign 'blacks' were constituting *and expanding* the local black population emerges, though this would not occur at the expense of the overall Bermudian-born numerical preponderance. Moreover, although the greatest increases in the 'black-woman' group occurred during the period of peace, it still seems probable that privateering, especially, led to the expansion of their numbers. The narrative of Mary Prince supports this contention. There appeared in the autobiography two foreign 'blacks', brought into Bermuda by Prince's third owner. One was a boy, "...an African from the coast of Guinea...". The other was a woman, "... a French Black called Hetty, whom ['Capt. I-' or John Ingham] took in privateering from another vessel and made his slave."²⁹

The 'White' Female Majority

One of the implications of the static local economy was noted by John Pitt: of inhabitants removing their families out of the colony for 'their better support'. Emigration, particularly emigration of 'white' men, contributed to what Elaine Forman Crane called a female majority, and her analysis of this female majority was, in fact, a by-product of a study of the numerical predominance of 'white' women in Bermuda. She examined the census reports sent by the governors to the Lords of Trade and Plantations. These calculated the demography from 1699 to 1744, and covered the crucial years of 1721, 1749, 1756, 1762, and 1768.³⁰ The years 1721, 1749, and especially those leading up to the conspiracy of 1761, show 'white' women enjoying a proportional numerical preponderance. This stabilised, between 1762 and 1768, in the aftermath of the conspiracy, with (as expected) a growth in the numbers of 'white' men by 2%. The number of 'black' women and men decreased by 1% respectively:

Table 6.--Percentages of 'Black' and 'White' Adults by Sex out of the Total Adult Population in Bermuda

Year	White women %	White men %	Black women %	Black men %	Percent Total	Total Adult number
1721	35	26	21	18	100	4547
1739	34	30	20	16	100	5424
1749	32	29	23	16	100	5417
1756	32	27	24	17	100	6674
1762	31	25	24	20	100	6568
1768	31	27	23	19	100	6201

Sources: Elaine Forman Crane "Socioeconomics of a Female Majority in Eighteenth-century Bermuda", *Signs*, 15:21 (Winter 1990), p. 237; CO 37 6, p. 146; CO 37 13, p. 189; CO 37 18, p. 128.

Comparatively speaking, this argument for local female majorities must, again, be extended to that population problematically lumped together as 'Black'. When taken as a single group within the class of 'blacks', women enjoy a similar condition of proportional numerical superiority: there are simply more 'black' women than 'black' men, boys and girls, respectively; and this is recorded whether or not one works under the assumption that all 'black' men have been included, even those known during these years to have been at sea:

Table 7.— Population of Bermuda according to Race and Sex, 1699-1768**'Blacks'**

YEAR	BLACK MEN	BLACK WOMEN	BLACK BOYS	BLACK GIRLS
1699	566	649	N/A	N/A
1721	817	965	880	852
1727	787	945	1158	987
1739	898	1083	871	933
1749	869	1219	1017	875
1756	1149	1569	1151	1031
1762	1287	1564	1288	1085
1768	1208	1429	1214	1034

'Whites'

YEAR	WHITE MEN	WHITE WOMEN	WHITE BOYS	WHITE GIRLS	WHITE MEN, SEA
1699	803	1050	N/A	N/A	N/A
1721	1169	1596	1072	1013	389
1727	*910	1768	1261	1131	N/A
1739	1618	1825	1058	968	408
1749	1593	1736	1090	871	387
1756	1826	2130	1317	1098	550
1762	1671	2046	1293	1142	439
1768	1674	1890	1276	1021	323

Sources: Elaine Forman Crane "Socioeconomics of a Female Majority in Eighteenth-century Bermuda", *Signs*, 15:21 (Winter 1990), p. 237; CO 37 6, p. 146; CO 37 12, p. 10; CO 37 18, p. 128; CO 37 13, p. 189.

*This figure probably excludes men at sea.¹¹

Crane calculated sex ratios, principally to contextualise her discussion of 'white' women resident in Bermuda, and noted that sex ratios (the ratio of women to men) tended to be low for both 'blacks' and 'whites' (i.e., low = below 1.00, and thus indicative of a female majority). Notably, only in 1727 does the data suggest a high overall sex ratio (i.e., the sex ratio for males versus females, regardless of race): it is attributed to an increase in the numbers of 'black' boys. Nonetheless, while sex ratios were low in the community of 'black' adults, they never descended lower than .70³² and never to .51 as recorded in 1727 for the 'white' adult community.³³ Statistics for 'black' adults remained principally within the .82 to .85 range.³⁴

The maritime revolution, which had begun at the close of the Somers Island Company era, was partly responsible for the demographic imbalance. But, as was alluded to by Pitt, the cause could also be located in the process of 'white' migration out of Bermuda: there was the implication that this migration was dominated in some way by men. Bermudians seem to have composed the bulk of the large number of settlers in Turks Island, particularly during the middle years of the 1700s. Crane argued, citing gubernatorial reports, that only a fraction (one-fifth to one-third) of adult males [read: 'white' males] were at sea; others were in the Turks Islands during this century, coming back to Bermuda annually.³⁵

One of the implications, as Crane noted, of this sex imbalance and, more notably, the high incidence of death among 'white' men involved in the overseas economy, was a change in patriarchal property customs. She noted that land alienation practices in Bermuda would have favoured men; but men were forced to provide opportunities for wives and daughters to inherit landed property. Women

who had become recipients of property were also occasionally known to pass property on to their daughters. Thus, within a context of the chronic economic difficulties of Bermuda during the eighteenth century, the low sex ratio and high occurrence of 'white' male death conspired to force landowners to leave property to their daughters. At the death of a male or female relative, cultural-economic traditions developed that made it possible for some females not to be left at the mercy of the weak local economy.³⁶ Justice of the Peace John Dickinson of Smiths, to take one example, ensured before his death in 1714 that accommodation was provided for his sister and his sister's bondswoman.³⁷

What this resulted in, as Crane conceived it, was 'white' Bermudian women holding more property "...than their sisters on the mainland."³⁸ However, as Crane warned, while the sex imbalance created more 'white' women proprietors than would have otherwise existed, the total value of female-held property was less than that held by men; and of course, more men held property than women.³⁹

Naturally, the provision of economic support also influenced the inheriting of human beings as property, and they were passed from husband to wife or father/mother to daughter for the reasons of ensuring female economic and social security. Crane offered the 1761 petition of Margaret Spencer as an example. Enslaved men and women provided income from their trades to their 'white' female proprietors: proprietors would have been able to appropriate the wages of their slaves, avoiding the tasks of heavy, tedious or perilous labour while enjoying its spoils. As Crane observed:

...[slave-holding] more than any other enabled white women- in particular widows or women whose husbands were at sea- to function in a society where they outnumbered men but where they could not compete with men for traditionally male-held jobs. White women without skills or property would have difficulty meeting their everyday expenses and local assessments, but by exploiting the skills of male and female slaves who had trades, or by hiring out slaves to repair the parish road or church or ferry, they could satisfy their obligations.⁴⁰

Manumissions were, of course, capable of being tied by a concerned parent or husband to the provision of some service to a 'white' female. John Peasely, for example, ordered in January 1716: "...if my wife will build a house and my man Myall behaves himself well and Assists his mistress till the house is finished then I will give him his freedom or at four years after my Decease, if he can better himself and not otherwise."⁴¹ Mrs. Peasely was thus assured the services of a mason/house-builder who had a very powerful reason to satisfy her standards of 'good behaviour'.

The 'Maritime Revolution': the development of a sea-based economy during the 1700s

Several elements constituted what can be characterised as the maritime economy, but three major parts of it can be identified: 'production' in the form of shipbuilding; distribution in the form of the selling and renting of locally-built vessels; and consumption in the use of locally-built (and other) vessels for the carrying trade, privateering, whaling and fishing. These sub-groups of activities can be examined separately.

Shipbuilding, specifically the manufacture of sloops (the aspect which mostly enhanced colony's balance of trade), was the industrial component of this

economy. Vessels were constructed at various shipyards. Most notably, the 'Shelly Bay' yards (facing the north and the open sea) and the Harrington Sound yards were located in the Tribes of Hamilton and Smiths. There were also shipyards to be found in the Tribe of Southampton which bordered the reef-filled Great Sound. Bermudian shipbuilders possessed a comparative advantage in the endemic *juniperus bermudiana* or Bermuda cedar. The scented wood of this tree was renowned for the durability it bestowed on the vessels built of it: and the vessels constructed were nearly always the so-called 'Bermuda sloop', famed for its strength and speed. By the middle of the 1700s, locally-built vessels, virtually all sloops, had become larger in size and more numerous. Michael Jarvis noted the expansion in both numbers and tonnage: from 18 vessels at 18.84 average tons in 1687, to 102 sloops at 25.64 average tons in 1734.⁴² Governor Alured Popple suggested that between 1734 and 1739 there had been 224 vessels built "...which at minimum," he calculated, "is 32 built each year."⁴³ Nonetheless, Popple recorded that in 1735, 75 sloops had been constructed and registered, at a total tonnage of 4814.⁴⁴

Rob Napier, in his vignette on the 'Bermuda sloop', suggested that the selling of these vessels often went with the selling of the goods they transported: masters of sloops were usually instructed to sell either the products on board or the boat itself upon arrival at a destination. Then they were to return, with the proceeds of these sales for the owners. Upon return home, if he were part-owner of the vessel, the master and the owners would split these proceeds between themselves.⁴⁵ Thus, the sale of the sloop was part of the larger carrying trade, the second, if not principal component of the maritime economy.

The carrying trade was certainly the more well-known component. The philosopher George Berkeley, in his argument for Bermuda as the site of his St. Paul's college, offered it as one reason for the colony's consideration. "They drive a constant Trade to the Islands of Jamaica, Barbadoes, Antego &c.", he wrote, "with Butter, Onions, Cabbages, and other Roots and Vegetables, which they have in Great Plenty and Perfection. They have also some small Manufactures of Joiner's Work and Matting, which they export to the Plantations and Continent."⁴⁶ He argued that Bermuda sloops were more frequently at American ports than vessels of "...any other..."; and he further declared:

...by the best Information I could get, it appears they are the only People ... [in] all the British Plantations, who hold a general Correspondence with the rest.⁴⁷

Hence, the colony stood to be well-supplied. Berkeley had written his proposal for a Bermuda college/seminary between the years 1724 and 1729, roughly the time when the Bermuda governor John Bruce Hope, and his successor John Pitt, were painting a very negative picture of, particularly, the agricultural prospects of the colony. They may have argued that his observations were too optimistic, and it is strange that the sources of this empirical philosopher would not appear represent their views. Nonetheless, the extent to which the class of merchant mariners specifically were supplying, profitably for themselves, American colonial exports should not be underestimated; and if the two governors and their successors are to be believed, the benefits of this commerce were clearly not, to the same degree, more widely spread.

Berkeley did note, moreover, that the carrying trade gave those benefiting from it an advantageous access to a variety of ports. The variety of these ports is

clear through an examination of sailor and passenger departure listings compiled between 1708 and 1720. Yet, this was during the Bermuda economy's more prosperous period. Listed as destinations were: North and South Carolina, New York, Boston, Virginia, Philadelphia, Turks Is., Exhuma in the Bahamas, Anguilla, St. Kitts, Jamaica, St. Thomas, Nevis and Sal Tortudas.⁴⁸ Merchant mariners from Bermuda had participated in the *kleine vaart*, the free trade which the Dutch Islanders of St. Eustatia had been allowed to establish during the 1700s. Cornelius Goslinga counted Bermudian traders as active in Statia in the years of 1744 and 1762, with eleven Bermudian ships entering in the former year and nine in the latter.⁴⁹

According to Alured Popple in 1739, trade with the Danish and Dutch island colonies, and with Madeira, constituted the only foreign commerce of Bermudian merchants: he cited specifically not only St. Eustatia, but Curaçao, St. Thomas, St. Johns, and St. Martins. It was there, he suggested, "...where they send their Vessells for Sale; and receive the Return in Cash, Cocoa, Cotton-Wool, & Salt."⁵⁰ Further, he noted: "...[n]ot more than two or three Sloops are sent thither in a Year: They carry thither Wheat, Flower, Indian Corn, Pipe Staves & Bees Wax which they get in the Northern Colonies, and with this Cargo and some cash they purchase wines."⁵¹ The famous 'Madeira Wine' was occasionally listed in wills and property inventories.

It was this particular portion of the foreign trade which was, according to Popple, creating difficulties between some Bermudian sloop merchants and the British Admiralty; for Popple had allowed himself to believe that the reason for the presence of Spanish and French currency on Bermudian sloops had little to do

with French and Spanish trading, but mostly to do with Bermuda-Dutch trading. After assuring the Lords of Trade and Plantations that "...no Trade is on with any foreign Places but with Dutch and Danes...", he continued:

I cannot however omit One Observation upon this Trade with the Dutch & Danish Islands, which will shew your Lord:⁴⁹ that such of our Sloops as have been taken, Seized and condemned, for no other Reason, than having Spanish Mony on Board, have met with hard Fate. These Dutch & Danish Islands do trade with the French and Spaniards, & in Consequence take their Mony: So that when our Sloops are sent there for Sale the Owners are obliged to receive Spanish Mony. This Mony, particularly Pistareens, passes at full nominal Value in the Maderas, viz:¹ 16 pence each, and therefore our Merchants chuse to send them.⁵²

Popple had just arrived in Bermuda when he had made these observations. Earlier commentators such as the controversial George Larkin, writing in 1702, would have had a different opinion. Larkin, in a letter to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, had complained that ships were failing to follow the customs declaration guidelines set forth by the metropolitan government, and detailed in Governor Benjamin Bennett's instructions. The presence of French and Spanish currency would have been interpreted by Larkin as part of the much larger irregularity of smuggling.

What is significant, however, is that the carrying trade took Bermudian merchant-mariners all around the Americas, and especially in what can be called the 'Northern Antilles Triangle'. This 'Triangle' stretched from Bermuda to Cuba to the island of Montserrat, back to Bermuda; and it included notable colonies such as the Bahamas chain, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico. The multinational diversity within the Triangle alone (along with its inclusion of some of the wealthiest sugar-producing colonies and the valuable salt ponds of Turks Island) often made it the centre of considerable metropolitan *and colonial* conflict. As

was noted in the last chapter, Bermuda's 'Negro' and 'Indian' populations were in large part composed of persons taken through privateering adventures of Bermudian inhabitants against any one of the non-English communities in or near the Triangle; and it was in this area that some of Bermuda's mariners of the eighteenth century came into conflict with the Spanish and French colonists (not infrequently from Hispaniola), particularly over the possession of Turks island salt production. More commonly, however, the 'Triangle' was the location of Bermudian privateering assaults on French and Spanish shipping, and of French and Spanish privateer and pirate attacks on British and Bermudian shipping.

This brings one to another part of the maritime economy: its more predatory face of privateering. There was the chronic hostility between Bermudians in the Turks Islands and the Spanish and French settlers in the colonies nearby, oscillating between hot and cold wars beginning in 1710 and ending by 1750.⁵³ The most significant of these engagements occurred as part of the general hostilities between England and Spain, constituting the 'War of the Spanish Succession'. Three years before the termination of hostilities in 1713, a privateering fleet under a Bermudian Lewis Middleton was sent to avenge a successful Spanish invasion of the Turks Islands that had driven nearly all of its Bermudian colonists off. The Spanish raid had caused the confiscation of chattels and bondservants. Middleton's assault recaptured Turks Island, and extended itself into a retaliatory raid against nearby Cuba.⁵⁴

A vignette, which outlined the experiences of Bermudians 'victimised' by privateer raiders from the other nations, was provided by an attorney-general of the Bahamas, John Gambier. Gambier was writing to that colony's governor in

April 1752, complaining of Spanish attacks on British shipping within the 'Triangle'. As he cited the assaults on Bermudian vessels, he focused on the misadventure of Bermudian mariner Edward Styles. Styles had had his sloop, goods and bondsmen-mariners taken by Spanish 'patrols':

Some of Our Vessels that go Windward to cut wood have been chased by some Spanish Vessels that call themselves Guarda Costas, and some Vessels from Bermuda that likewise go to the most Windward of the Bahamas Islands to cut Wood and Cruize for Wrecks, have been chased also, and some of them absolutely taken...⁵⁵

Apart from these chronic conflicts, three wars between Britain, and Spain and France were fought in the period between 1700 and 1765: the 'War of the Spanish Succession' (1710-1713); the 'War of the Austrian Succession' (1740-1748); and the 'Seven Years' War' (1756-1763). They provided more than enough opportunity for enrichment through the predatory activities of the privateersman (and pirates); and notably, two of these wars occurred alongside the slight 'improvements' in the local economy.

What were the local impact and local implications of the maritime economy, particularly the trading and privateering aspects? This is perhaps properly measured by the number of ships built and the volume of men involved in overseas shipping. An introduction of the latter may be determined easily through the number enumerated of 'white' men at sea. Shipbuilding aside, with its heavy use of enslaved 'black' artisans and labourers, there were still parts of the maritime trade dominated by free 'white' men. Alured Popple recorded that one-fourth part of a sloop's crew was composed of 'black' sailors- one of the few official calculations of 'black' mariners. The implication is that three-fourths parts

of this crew were 'white'.⁵⁶ One gets an idea of why the proportions were so large, and specifically of the growth of 'popular' involvement, when one examines the numbers of 'white' men at sea. It is particularly notable how this figure rose when the British government became embroiled in military conflicts:

Table 8.— Number of 'White' Men at Sea, 1721-62

Year	'White' men at sea	Contemporary event
1721	389	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace • Post-war boom in Britain ends in 1719
1739	408	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace • War of the Austrian Succession/Jenkins' Ear begins in 1740
1749	387	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold War in North Antilles Triangle • War of Austrian Succession ends in 1748
1756	550	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven Years' War (1756-1763)
1762	439	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven Years' War (1756-1763)

Sources: Elaine Forman Crane "Socioeconomics of a Female Majority in Eighteenth-century Bermuda", *Signs*, 15:21 (Winter 1990), p. 237; CO 37 6, p. 146; CO 37 13, p. 189; CO 37 18, p. 128.

When numbers of men contributed by each Tribe are listed alongside the number of sloops and the tonnage, it is interesting that the far western Tribes were among the greatest contributors of 'white' men (in 1739 and 1756), and shipping (in 1739). The Tribe of Pembroke is a notable exception in that it forms part of the northern boundary of the Great Sound, a body of water which was bordered in the south and west by the extreme western parishes. The manufacturing power of the shipyards of Smiths and Hamilton can be noted in passing. Hamilton Tribe helped to encircle the Harrington Sound Bay area whose access through the narrows led to the tiny hamlet of Flatts Village. The four ships built in 1739 roughly averaged 50 tons each, more tonnage respectively than the one ship built in the colonial capital. The two Tribes contributed forty-five 'white' men to sailing in 1739, and

sixty-seven in 1756. There was also a tight web of interaction (of a political, economic and social nature) between these Tribes: both shared the facilities of the Flatts village, the resources of the Harrington Sound, and the perceived vexatious inconveniences of the Flatts village bridge. With regard to their maritime involvement, it is worth viewing both as if they constituted one unit. Thus, as a unit, they were among the top five of the Tribes contributing men to the overseas trade in 1756:

Table 9.— Contributions of Sloops to the Maritime Industry per Tribe (1756)

Tribe	No. of Sloop(s)	Tonnage	'White' men @ Sea (1739)	'White' men @ Sea (1756)
St. George's	1	44	75	103
Hamilton	4	220	24	26
Smiths	2	140	21	41
Devonshire	0	0	23	47
Pembroke	11	714	70	67
Paget	13	856	39	36
Warwick	11	780	70	59
Southampton	18	1124	62	107
Sandys	15	936	24	64
<i>Total</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>4814</i>	<i>408</i>	<i>550</i>

Sources: CO 37 13, p. 189; CO 37 18, p. 128.

It is, of course, not appropriate to completely reduce the group of 'white men at sea' into the class of 'white' adult sailors, or even 'white' male sailors. But, it is interesting to note them as the proportion of 'white' men *necessarily involved* in overseas maritime labour, as offered through this calculation of 'white

men at sea':

Table 10.— Numbers of 'White' Men at Sea and at Home, 1721-62

Year	'white' men at sea	%	'white' men at home	%	total of 'white' men	%
1721	389	25	1169	75	1558	100
1739	408	25	1210	75	1618	100
1756	550	30	1276	70	1826	100
1762	439	26	1232	74	1671	100

Sources: Elaine Forman Crane, "Socioeconomics of a Female Majority in Eighteenth-century Bermuda", *Signs*, 15:21 (Winter 1990), p. 237; CO 37 6, p. 146; CO 37 13, p. 189; CO 37 18, p. 128.

Particularly when accepting the 'men at sea' totals as the most minimum figure for the number sailors, the suggestion of the maritime industries' large claims on the 'white' adult male demography becomes underscored; and again, 1756 and 1762, a period of war and privateering, were years coincidental with the largest proportion of 'white' adult male departures to sea employment.

The involvement of one-quarter to a third of the 'white' men in sailing was the result of other economic factors. Many 'white' artisans/'mechanics' had found it increasingly difficult to compete with coalition of enslaved 'black' tradesmen and their proprietors. This was where some contemporary commentators located the source of their massive emigration. William Popple, for example, in his address to the Assembly in December 1761 (two months after the arrest of the alleged participants in the Conspiracy of 1761) linked the predominance of 'Negro' artisans to the impoverishment of 'the poorer whites'. "To breed Negroes to common Trades & Mechanics", he wrote, "if it was only for this single reason that it prevents the poorer white Inhabitants from following such vocations & breeding their Children thereto, is the most pernicious practice that can be fallen

upon & must end in impoverishing the poorer Sort."

He continued:

To lessen the Numbers of Negroes as soon as may be, is what I now recommended to your particular consideration as the most effectual means as well not only to secure public tranquillity...but to put it in the Power of several industrious, but poor white Inhabitants to get bread for themselves, & for the support of their family's.⁵⁷

One modern historian felt that the attitudes some 'whites' were entertaining about artisan work were the reasons why many were not involved in the trades: that there was a 'white' tendency to stigmatise the trades and tradesmen. He argued that not a few 'whites' conceived of the 'mechanic arts' as labour not worthy of 'whites' but appropriate only of 'blacks'; and racial chauvinism in the eighteenth century was keeping many 'whites' out of the trades and, by extension, into a self-inflicted poverty.⁵⁸ Indeed, any work that employed large numbers of 'black' slaves was viewed with opprobrium. Praedial labour is one example;⁵⁹ and it comes as no surprise, therefore, that wage-work sailing, a job viewed with great derision outside of Bermuda, was not viewed so in Bermuda: even as late as 1740 it would not be dominated by enslaved 'blacks', but by free 'white' men.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, there were still some 'white' tradesmen, as noted by the books of wills, bills of sale, and jury lists. But many of the men recorded in the public documents as artisans had slaves working as 'assistants' carrying out much of the work. As a parallel example, seventeenth-century tobacco farmers had devolved the bulk of their work on enslaved Bermudian farmers. Moreover, seventeenth-century artisans, as the bills of sale records in the 1600s implied, 'bred up' many servants in these trades, to assist them in their work.

Highlighting this point is an example from colonial Antigua. During the early part of the 1700s, the island had an analogous situation: enslaved 'black' tradesmen "...drastically narrowed opportunities for white employment..."; and there, as in Bermuda, this led to some concern about the low number of 'whites'. Notably, certain Antiguan legislators sought to increase the number of 'white' tradesmen by passing a law restricting the number of 'Negroes' taught the trades. As David Barry Gaspar noted, the Bill failed to gain the co-operation of slave proprietors for much the same reasons it would fail to do so in Bermuda several decades later: many "...made a living off the earnings of their skilled property."⁶¹

Thus, for a few local 'white' artisans (particularly those without slaves) the maritime economy (with its reliable wages and, during wartime, perquisites of a share of privateer/pirate plunder) was very attractive. Again, the result of this was the *lowering* of the local numbers of 'white' men, particularly sharp during the middle-century years. There was a connection between the occurrence of military conflicts and Bermuda's ('white') female majority.

Perquisites from the maritime economy

Harbecke-Metz took the point that the presence of napkins, sets of cups and saucers, tables, sets of forks, and clocks reflected not only consumerism, but the capacity (of an economy) to procure for its members luxury items. This was the case with napkins which, according to her, "...are non-essential and since they count as linens, they are relatively costly."⁶² She divided the estates into four groups according to their value in pounds. One can examine her data for the years 1688 to 1777.

All of the inventories of persons with estates valued at £491 or more virtually always had the luxury items listed above. This is not a spectacular finding. But what is more notable is that during or after periods of conflict (when compared with periods of peace) some of those whose goods were inventoried from the lesser-valued estates possessed luxury items, albeit in lesser proportions than others. Yet, while larger numbers of people, *notably between 1733 and 1777*, could be counted on to possess luxury items, often the majority did not:

Table 11. —Presence of Sets of Cups and Saucers (numbers in %)

Wealth in Pounds					CONTEMPORARY EVENT
YEAR	0-49	50-225	226-490	491+	
1688-1709	0	0	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nine Years' War (1688-97) • War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13)
1710-1732	N/A	0	0	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13) • Post-war boom in Britain (1713-19)
1733-1754	100	20	100	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War of Austrian Succession/Jenkins' Ear (1739-40)
1755-1777	66	62	75	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven Years' War (1756-1763) • American Revolutionary Wars (1776-83)

Source: Cara Anne Harbecke-Metz, "Wealth in Bermuda in the Eighteenth Century: A View from the Probate Inventories of the Colonial Capital of St. George's", *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History*, 6 (1994), pp. 99-103.

Table 12.— Presence of Napkins (numbers in %)**Wealth in Pounds**

YEAR	0-49	50-225	226-490	491+	CONTEMPORARY EVENT
1688-1709	75	100	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nine Years' War (1688-97) • War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13)
1710-1732	N/A	75	50	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13) • Post-war boom in Britain (1713-19)
1733-1754	100	20	100	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War of Austrian Succession/Jenkins' Ear (1739-40)
1755-1777	0	50	75	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven Years' War (1756-1763) • American Revolutionary Wars (1776-83)

Source: Cara Anne Harbecke -Metz, "Wealth in Bermuda in the Eighteenth Century: A View from the Probate Inventories of the Colonial Capital of St. George's", *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History*, 6 (1994), pp. 99-103.

Table 13.— Presence of Tea Tables (numbers in %)**Wealth Pounds**

YEAR	0-49	50-225	226-490	491+	CONTEMPORARY EVENT
1688-1709	0	0	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nine Years' War (1688-97) • War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13)
1710-1732	N/A	0	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13) • Post-war boom in Britain (1713-19)
1733-1754	0	0	75	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War of Austrian Succession/Jenkins' Ear (1739-40)
1755-1777	33	25	50	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven Years' War (1756-1763) • American Revolutionary Wars (1776-83)

Source: Cara Anne Harbecke -Metz, "Wealth in Bermuda in the Eighteenth Century: A View from the Probate Inventories of the Colonial Capital of St. George's", *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History*, 6 (1994), pp. 99-103.

Table 14.-- Presence of Forks (numbers in %)**Wealth in Pounds**

YEAR	0-49	50-225	226-490	491+	CONTEMPORARY EVENT
1688-1709	0	100	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nine Years' War (1688-97) • War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13)
1710-1732	N/A	50	50	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13) • Post-war boom in Britain (1713-19)
1733-1754	N/A	25	75	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War of Austrian Succession/Jenkins' Ear (1739-40)
1755-1777	N/A	36	25	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven Years' War (1756-1763) • American Revolutionary Wars (1776-83)

Source: Cara Anne Harbocke-Metz, "Wealth in Bermuda in the Eighteenth Century: A View from the Probate Inventories of the Colonial Capital of St. George's", *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History*, 6 (1994), pp. 99-103.

Of course, it is again worth noting that the data were taken from a restricted sample, further restricted as only St. George's inventories were examined. But the findings are not in conflict with the data presented in other documentation. They suggest that, particularly during the middle-century war years, there was a considerable circulation of consumer goods and luxury items. These became years of (albeit limited) consumer wealth, and an understanding of them as such is crucial to determining patterns of accumulation within the 'black' population.

II. The Political Context

From Bennett to Popple: the rise and fall of an 'era of good feeling'

Richard Dunn commented on what he saw justifiably as the farcical features in the Somers Island Company *quo warranto* proceedings. He made particular note of the hostile interactions between governors and colonists in the years before Governor Bennett's arrival. This was the so-called 'anarchical era', when colonial governors battled at an often fruitless task of reducing England's colonial subjects in Bermuda to acquiescence.⁶³ "After the arrival of Governor Bennett in 1701", quipped Dunn,

the colony's political temperature dropped noticeably. Fines and forfeitures dwindled. The Assembly actually raised several new taxes. For the first time the Council and the Assembly began to keep records methodically, and the governor began to send home frequent and reasonably honest reports. The Board of Trade could be told in 1702 that a royal governor of Bermuda 'is the delight of the whole island'.⁶⁴

Attitudes to governors in the early years of their Bermuda administration tended to be positive, and then proceeded to corrode over time: but the general relationship between Benjamin Bennett and the colonists always remained reasonably amicable.⁶⁵ Henry Wilkinson recalled, as an example of an almost ferocious devotion, how a clerk was nearly imprisoned under the orders of the assemblymen for indulging in a sarcastic remark about the governor.⁶⁶ "We your Majesties Most Loyal and Dutiful Subjects," read one colonial petition to Whitehall about Bennett, "should be deservedly Ranked among the Number of the most Ungrateful If we should Omit what we in all humility offer to your Sacred Majestie Our unfeigned thanks and due Acknowledgement of Your Majesties Repeated Bounty and Royal Regaurd over us In the Continuance of Our said

Governor."⁶⁷

One necessary, though by no means sufficient, cause of this good will was economic. The decline in the local economy had begun roughly near the end of Bennett's second and final term of office; later governors were to preside during much more challenging economic circumstances.

But the principal factor was political. When George Larkin wrote his scathing letter to the Board of Trade about the government of Bennett, he went beyond the simple accusations of gubernatorial leniency. Larkin, who will be discussed below, had arrived in Bermuda in 1701. He was sent by the Board of Trade and Plantations to examine issues arising out of Bennett's government. Bennett's management was characterised by a collusive undergoverning that, according to Larkin, gave rise to a plethora of abuses. One example concerned his attitude to Bermudian smuggling. Merchant mariners were not reporting to any customs houses before unloading cargoes. They instead by-passed customs officials altogether and went directly to their shore-front homes in the western and eastern parishes. They would wait away from shore in their sloops after their arrival into Bermuda. Then, at nightfall, they quickly sailed to their houses/warehouses, removing all goods and imports from their sloops without ever having them taxed (or condemned). Bennett, complained Larkin, was not enforcing his royal instructions, and the English government was being 'cheated':

...notwithstanding... for a small present to the Governor the same is dispensed with and they are suffered to go up into the Countrey where almost every master of a vessell hath his storehouse by means wherof her Majesty is a sufferer in her custome, and here brandy and other Commodities brought frequently both from the French and Dutch Islands...⁶⁸

Moreover, the illegality began to take on complex proportions, as Larkin

alleged that Bermudian sloop-merchants were engaging in a particularly convoluted scheme to shroud illegal commercial activities:

...one way of trading I understand they have here as well as in other places upon the Continent of America which admits of no dispute at their Return, a vessell goes from this place goes [sic] to Barbados and there the Master that make an Entry att the Custome House of a parcell of dry goods, so many pieces of Holland, or Hollands Duck, or any other Commodities which he is sure he can have at the Dutch or French Islands, he hath [D]okquets for these goods but afterwards will pretend that his money falls short, and he cannot make a purchase of them, but gives out that perhaps he may receive money before he leaves the Island, he afterwards takes out his clearings and goes away to the Dutch or French Islands and there takes in the goods for which he had [D]okquets at Barbados.⁶⁹

Needless to say if Bennett had bothered himself or his customs agent to investigate local smuggling, either one would have run into a problem of evidence: "...a Negro by an Act of Assembly here cannot be evidence agt. a White person..."⁷⁰ - a fact among other facts that made them perfect for the job of unloading illegally procured goods from ships.

But, in fairness to Bennett, other governors had to endure smuggling, and even Alured Popple complained of it. Popple saw the source of the problem as more 'systemic' than a lack of moral guidance or moral courage: "The customs House Officers here take all the care they can to prevent illegal Trade. But the small Number cannot entirely put a Stop to it." He continued:

The Commissioners of the Customs have appointed a Collector and Searcher who together with the Naval Officer, make whole up the whole Number, except an additional Searcher at the West End of these Isl:ds which the Collector thought necessary to be appointed, because as I informed your Lord:^{sh} in my Letter of the 25th of Novem:^r 1738, Many Vessells making that Part of the Land first, come in there: And if the Wind Should not prove fair for coming to Town, they might be confin'd many Days there before such Vessells make any Entry in the Customs House, during which Time, if no Searcher was there, the Masters of such Vessells, would have a opportunity of running what Goods they Please. The Collector informs me, that he has given an Account to the Commissioners of Customs, of his having appointed an additional Searcher, and that he has desired some Salary may be annexed to his Office.⁷¹

"I wish he may be succeed," sighed Popple, "for unless an officer be continued at the West End, I do not think it possible for the Officer in S:^t Georges, to prevent the clandestine Running of Goods anywhere else."⁷² Yet, regardless of these persisting 'systemic' problems, Larkin had contended that all that was needed was for Bennett to enforce his commission; and as Bennett had not done so, he had worked against the royal prerogative and the royal/metropolitan interest.⁷³

William Popple's government was the opposite of Bennett's: Popple's concern was with following administrative procedure strictly; and he was less tolerant than his predecessors of local 'irregularities', regardless of what form they took. Thus the types of dereliction and abuse complained of by Larkin would not find their way into the government of William Popple. Indeed, it appeared as if Popple was insistent on following the law regardless of whether it benefited the elite, 'blacks' (bond or free), or the proprietors. Of course, it is equally true, that those furthest away from constituting metropolitan interests, the English constitution, and the law (i.e., the 'blacks') would benefit the least from his fastidiousness. But occasional moments of benefit could arise for some groups of

'Negroes' and 'mulattos', as will be noted. It is not surprising, thus, that the relationship between Popple and the legislature, and between Popple and the majority of the colonial population constituted one of the most turbulent of eighteenth-century Bermudian politics. Indeed, combined with conflicts between colonists, between assemblymen, and between the Assembly and Popple, and with a servile conspiracy added, it was the exact opposite of the North American meaning of an 'era of good feeling' heretofore enjoyed by Bennett.

Popple was born in 1701, the grandson of William Popple, Sr., and through that connection had had a long history with the Board of Trade and Plantations. The elder Popple was the nephew of Andrew Marvell and a friend of John Locke: he had translated Locke's *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, and shared Locke's interest in the establishment of the first British empire sufficiently to join the Board of Trade and Plantations. Often he received many reports from the various colonies under its supervision. Indeed, William Popple, Sr. and his son were both familiar with Benjamin Bennett's government: on March 5, 1706, William Popple, Jr. was responding to questions from Bennett on his father's behalf regarding an administrative matter.⁷⁴

Nonetheless, William Popple III entered the Board of Trade first at the board's treasury office when he was twenty-nine years of age; and the ease of his elevation through that department probably reflected both family connections and his support for the Whig administration. He was, by 1737, promoted to the post of solicitor and clerk of reports, the same year when he would have been receiving accounts from Antigua regarding the servile conspiracy of Court and Tomboy.⁷⁵ Yet, personal and family history implied a familiarity with the operations of the

Board and colonial government, if not only a loyalty to the metropolitan administration. Both were to emerge in his dealings with the Bermudians. The professional Whitehall bureaucrat, possessing English government connections and a knowledge of its recondite operations, proved to be a problematic adversary to many Bermudian assemblymen and colonists.

Popple arrived in 1747, two years after the sudden death of his relative Alured; and upon arrival, he took up residence in the imposing Bridge House mansion where his predecessor had lived. Located at the base of the hill leading to the Sessions House, where both the Executive Council and Assembly occasionally met, it gave him an opportunity to watch Assembly members filing up to the sittings of the House. It was probably the only empirical way he could take an account of those who bothered to attend its meetings.

Moreover, the governor would patronisingly lecture assemblymen on Parliamentary procedure, and Wilkinson noted how he had even gone so far as to correct grammatical flaws openly as he found them in their legislation.⁷⁶ He complained to the Board of Trade of the persistent inability of this body to meet, due to innumerable membership absences; and he, with apparent sarcasm, wrote to them in February 1762:

I transmitted to Your Lordships at the same time Six Acts with the Minutes of Council, Council in Assembly & Assembly to July 1761, since which nothing has been done here by the Legislature in their publick Capacity, owing to the excessive heat of the Weather, Sickness, Hurricane Months, & private Business of their own, to which they always make the publick Business give way 'till the month of August...⁷⁷

He was, at one point, forced to dissolve the Assembly and order a re-election. Inter-Assembly squabbling had prevented a quorum from forming a consecutive number of times. When it re-opened, he sent an address to them: "... I

must observe to you, That it will lie more with Yourselves than it can with me, to shorten your attendances, and save your own time, for ... Delay is generally owing to the differences of opinion, and opinion even in public debates too often swayed by partial consideration of private interests. A contracted habit of thinking will never promote the good of any place."⁷⁸

The anti-Popple faction which immediately formed in the Assembly and on the Council was led by seven men, according to Wilkinson: John Butterfield, John Tucker, Colonel Henry Tucker, Joseph Jennings, Nathaniel Bascome and John Harvey.⁷⁹ Norden led the anti-Popple party in England. Popple had apparently blamed him for generating local ill-will before his arrival: "'I was look't upon before my arrival as the enemy of Bermuda,'" he apparently had written in a letter to Norden, "'and have been treated as such ever since...'"⁸⁰ But prominent within the leadership of the anti-Popple group was, unfortunately for Popple, the Speaker of the House of Assembly Cornelius Hinson: Hinson's hostility apparently developed so fully that he had offered a bribe to a soldier to shoot the governor in the head. Fortunately for Popple, nothing came of it.⁸¹

But the broader socio-political war waged between the two factions disrupted the operation of government ten years prior to international war and local servile revolution. At the summit of the struggle in 1747, Hinson's group in the Assembly suspended the disbursement of moneys which in turn led to the suspension of the operation of the judiciary and most of the executive. Thus, the civil watches were suspended, as were courts of law and customs' inspections. One year later the Assembly allowed payments as usual, but a feeling of 'disorder' had already descended on the colony.⁸² When his enemies sent a letter to

Whitehall demanding his recall, Popple finally decided that it was wise to return to England and shore up his support within the metropolitan government. He left in 1752, and would not return until November 1755.

The brief period that Popple was away did not remove the powerful opposition to his government. But conflicts between assemblymen were enough apparently to mitigate its intensity by 1760; and the Assembly's reply to his address made it clear that these intra-legislature battles were powerful enough to immobilise this body. It is within these conflicts that elite disharmony, a phenomenon usually advanced to explain the emergence of servile rebellion, provided an important context for the Conspiracy of 1761.

III. The Politics of Slavery during the Eighteenth Century

General features in the nature of 'new slavery'

William Popple, in an address to the House of Assembly in 1761, made a passing and convoluted reference to the quantity of slaves in the colony: "As to the Numbers of Negroes in these Islands," he complained, "I need not observe to You, that it is much too great for the safety, & the Uses for which such Slaves in other places where they have large Plantations, works & other calls for them, are

required."⁸³ It was a common complaint: that Bermuda's economy did not need large numbers of slaves. Nonetheless, regardless of these concerns, the maritime revolution and the decline of the tobacco plantation economy would not lead to a 'predictable' decline in their numbers, as has been demonstrated. Indeed the converse occurred. Artisan slaves replaced, in large numbers, enslaved agriculturists, and household economies became as equally dependent on their labour as farms had been on that of their predecessors.

These household economies were particularly dependent on the wages of enslaved tradesmen and domestics. Crane had written how female proprietors utilised their slaves as sources of income and as surrogate participants in lucrative male-only occupations. Petitions desiring the reprieve of convicted bondservants often revealed just how integral the income of the slaves was to the domestic economy. When Tom, a 'Negro' man, flung John Cox over a bridge and into the sea, his proprietor, Ruth Wells, demonstrated this dependence in her petition to the Justices of the Peace: "...what punishment their worships in their wisdom thought fitt to Order may be given him here- but that he may not be Sent off the Island...". She was a single woman, she added, "...and he the Chiefest part of her maintenance."⁸⁴ According to the cordwainer David Tynes, who was neither a single woman nor a widow, his convicted slave Toney was "... the only serviceable Negro he had in Possession...", and "...being in great Measure what [Tynes]... depended upon for the support of a large Family of Young Children."⁸⁵

The centrality of slaves to the household, generally, was clear from the near beginnings of colonial settlement in Bermuda. A letter, written in April 1646 to the Earl of Manchester, pleaded on behalf of a couple in Bermuda that land and

"...a Negroe or two..." be granted them- "...soe may their lives become comfortable."⁸⁶ It had made an allusion to Sir Robert Rich and his practice of granting 'Negroes'. Rich had, in the 1640s, given 'Negros' to his tenants for their comfort.⁸⁷ From the late 1660s and the end of the 1700s, governors could complain of being short-changed and their comfort compromised if not given their allocation of 'Negroes and other slaves': a group of bondservants had always been granted to the governor as a group called the 'King's slaves'. This dispensation was not too infrequently a topic of dispute between unpopular governors and the Assembly granting it. It was in an act of spite, for example, that the Assembly ignored Popple's request for compensation in lieu, as he put it, of "...[the] deficiency of Negroes & firewood allowed to former Governors time out of mind..."⁸⁸

Hudson Strobe's comments thus summarise this 'new slavery' as it emerged in Bermuda during the 1700s: the new employment that an economy, caught somewhere between the societies of Virginia and Boston, required of this burgeoning enslaved caste. "On every estate," he wrote, "one slave had to learn the shoe-maker's trade and make shoes for the family. Many of the places possessed carpenter shops for cabinet making, perfume stills for preparing scent, and work-rooms for silversmiths. Somewhat feudal in aspect the estates of the interior were conducted on a more elaborate scale than those of sea-faring traders who were seldom at home."⁸⁹ An *ideal* of the 'comfortable life', for those without the sea as an alternative abode, seemed to imply, following Strobe, a somewhat self-contained existence with large numbers of bondservants able to satisfy a large number of domestic needs; and as an extension to this, the artisan could be hired

out to increase the family income.

Yet the desire for 'keeping slaves' in eighteenth-century Bermuda went beyond, of course, simple economics. Most writers have added that with the quantity of enslaved labourers came, for the proprietor, prestige and self-confidence.⁹⁰ Governor James George Bruere put this point less charitably. He had apparently written in an address to the House of Assembly in May 1779:

'The great number of slaves which are now kept by the poor white inferior people of these islands have sapped the foundations of respect and obedience to government in the white people by their authority over the slaves which gives them a certain imperious behaviour in the master or mistress...'

It was, he continued, "...very unbecoming in any exalted stations and much more so in any necessitous white persons who ought to work themselves for their support and not depend on a negro to pick up a nail or a pin or carry away a small quantity of provisions."⁹¹ For Bruere, writing as revolutionary war raged in North America, it perhaps explained the political mentalities of slave-holding revolutionaries: may have conceived slave proprietorship as at the root of a common affliction undermining local governmental authority in particular, and the socio-political order of the Old Empire in general.⁹²

The major local 'problem' that had arisen out of chattel slavery in Bermuda's problematic economy was connected to Bermudian eighteenth-century customs. Legislation since the 1620s (as will be outlined below) demanded that proprietors be totally responsible for the provisioning of their slaves. It was illegal for slaves to provision themselves: slaves worked for others, and were given the surplus as was decided by the proprietor; and many proprietors were either unable or unwilling to provide slaves a satisfactory amount. Thus, for many slaves,

poverty in Bermuda was a real possibility.

Strategies engaged in by bondservants to overcome this problem will be examined within the discussion of the enslaved merchant mariner. But what can be noted is that this relationship invariably induced illegal measures and created conflicts between proprietor and bondservant. 'Indolence' was one among many strategies bondservants resorted to in protest against this expropriation. "The Negro had a right to be indolent," argued Lt.-Governor Henry Hamilton, "as his master procures the stipulated sum, and is I believe rarely questioned as to the means by which it is required [sic], hence the speculation, breaking through fences, stealing cotton, poultry...any surplus."⁹³ The speculation was of proprietors ignoring thefts by slaves; and theft was the other strategy utilised by some slaves to deal with the problem of poverty. Yet, as was clear in the Hamilton complaint, the degree these thefts constituted a 'resistance' was mollified by the behaviour of the proprietors: some slave holders, again, conceived of the stealing as a means of providing resources for their slaves.

There had also been the suggestion of official collusion with this practice: Justices of the Peace averted their eyes when all illegal 'self-provisioning' by slaves occurred. A 1730 law, for example, sought to place penalties on this collusion: "...if any Justice of the Peace in these Islands shall or do any way neglect or refuse or connive at the due Prosecution of this Act, according to the true Intent and Meaning...[he] shall forfeit and pay the Sum of Five Pounds current money for every such Offence...".⁹⁴ The legislation had outlawed several 'Negro enormities', and re-criminalised trade by bondservants. But it summed up the persisting complaints of others: "... and many times by attempting to steal from the

Inhabitants of these Islands... ['Negroes'] do put the Inhabitants, or some of their families, in Terror, Dread, and Jeopardy of their lives...".⁹⁵ Apart from the obvious possibilities of exaggeration, it is clear that this societal 'terror' was a small price to pay, to some, in comparison to the comforts offered by slavery in Bermuda's economy.

"We humbly conceive," declared the Grand Jury in 1730, "that if the Justices of the peace in their several districts, would Lay aside ye fear of gaining ill will or disrespect and without Partiality, Comply with the duty of their offices in putting such breaches of the penal Laws in due Execution, as shall or may Come to their views or Knowledge; It might be some means to check the strong currant of vice now Reigning, tho' it may not perhaps wholly stop the same."⁹⁶ Stealing was not complained of specifically by the Grand Jury in their presentment, but it would be difficult to insist that it was not a consideration.

Faced, however, with the problem of economic distress and the expropriation practices of proprietors, many bondservants found themselves at the junction between poverty and crime. Not a few chose crime, and out of this choice arose acts of resistance: the final portion of this 'broader context' chapter examines the variety of instruments available to proprietors to blunt this and other types of servile resistance.

The instruments of proprietor power

It has been argued that while the law *allowed* and *even mandated* the use of certain instruments of power, this use was rare. There were, it has been stated, few instances of corporal punishment, sale, transportation, execution and even extra-judicial murder, although each of these had at one point been allowable under the law. The historical record, however, would appear to offer a less extreme alternative picture.

One of the most prominent acts proprietors could commit against slaves was sale, and it was probably the more feared of many. Through sale, a slave could be given to anyone, anywhere; and families if sold together could easily be separated and scattered across the islands or across the Americas. Both possibilities arose especially if a sale occurred through auction: when each slave would have been taken by the highest bidder; with each of the highest bidders not necessarily being the same person.

But the impression has been given that slave sales rarely, if ever, occurred in Bermuda. Governor William Browne, for example, apparently wrote to Lord North in October 1783 that "...in Bermuda it is thought as reproachful to sell a servant as it would be in any other country to sell a son'."⁹⁷ Crane had seen Browne's statement as providing at least inductive support for her contention that *slaves believed* their lives would not be disrupted by sale. Utilising a conditional ("...if Governor William Browne was correct when he asserted..."), and a probability ("...[s]lave ownership was likely to have lasted for the life time of at least the mistress...") she put herself in the position of arguing that proprietors rarely sold their slaves. She offered, as further evidence, a few wills in which the

"...consent of the slave was a prerequisite to his or her sale and that a slave might be given the choice of which legatee to serve after the death of an original owner..."⁹⁸.

Cyril Packwood had sarcastically replied to Browne's view, and what he suggested problematised Crane's position. Most Bermudians, he argued, "...evidently were not afraid of being reproached, because Blacks and Indians were sold throughout Bermuda's history."⁹⁹ He continued, repeating what Pitt had noted, that around 1730 "...many Blacks were not just sold but transported to other colonies and sold."¹⁰⁰

Crane was, however, correct when she noted that some wills protected slaves from sale after the death of the master. The will of Henry Tucker serves as an example. Tucker expressed his appreciation for what he characterised as the "... Diligence and Fidelity in ...[his]...service" of, and the 'good affection' he felt he enjoyed from, his slaves Dealer and Hannah. He decided to reward them by instructing that they be protected from sale to any others but his children, and that "...they may be kindly treated and dealt with during the remainder of their lives."¹⁰¹

Yet there was, still, a number of sales throughout Bermuda's pre-Emancipation history. St. George's widow Ann Welsh, for example, requested a sale in her will of a 'Negro child' called Plunket. She instructed her executors in May 1716 to sell the girl three months after Welsh's demise. There was no mention in the will of Plunket's father, mother, or other family members.¹⁰²

Thomas Prudden, four years before (March 16, 1712) conceived a similar future for a 'Negro' girl. Prudden, who described himself as a Paget Tribe mariner,

ordered that the girl, named Ruth, "...be sold or otherwise to be Disposed off (for the Use and Benefitt of my Said Children Equally) as my Executors Shall think fitt."¹⁰³ She was presumably the 'Negro' listed in an inventory of his slaves, compiled March 1, 1714.¹⁰⁴ Some people had been sold in Bermuda to defray the costs of marriages or funerals. Meriam Briggs, another St. George's widow, instructed, in her will of November 17, 1718, that her 'Indian' slave Joan be sold to "...pay for her funeral costs."¹⁰⁵ Keziah Feubart, a Hamilton Tribe widow, instructed in August 1738 that Tom the Younger, a 'Negro boy', be sold "...towards the payment of [her]... just Debts ffuneral Charges &c...". Notably Tom the Younger was placed in the will with Bess a 'Negro woman', with the context suggesting that Bess was his mother. She was, in a way not specified, to have been "...already Disposed off...".¹⁰⁶ Presumably this meant that Feubart had already sold or gave Bess away; indeed, when Feubart died in March of the following year, only one 'negro boy' was listed in the inventory of her effects. This was presumably Tom the Younger, valued at £5.¹⁰⁷

The better known example of a sale for the purpose of defraying costs is found in the narrative of Mary Prince. She had, in fact, been sold twice, at both times when she was still a child. On the first occasion when she was an infant, she and her mother were sold upon the death of their master: "I was bought along with my mother by old Captain Darrel, and given to his grandchild, little Miss Betsey Williams."¹⁰⁸ On the second occasion she and a group of her siblings, were auctioned off in Hamilton: the proceeds were to offset the costs of the second marriage of Betsey Williams' father.¹⁰⁹ The description of the auction reveals the impotence of slaves when faced with the vicissitudes of the sale event. As Prince's

mother prepared her children for the auctioneer, the mother remarked ruefully, "See, I am shrouding my poor children; what a task for a mother!" Regarding the people who made their bids for the children or stood around carelessly as the event unfolded, Mary Prince recalled: "No, no! They were not all bad, but slavery hardens white people's hearts towards the blacks; and many of them were not slow to make their remarks about us aloud, without regard to our grief- though their light words fell like cayenne on the fresh wounds of our hearts. Oh those white people have small hearts who can only feel for themselves."¹¹⁰

But the description highlighted the reasons behind the servile dread of slave sales and auctions. Prince's family was to be scattered and its integrity destroyed after the second sale. Indeed, her experiences, from her perspective, became decidedly worse, as it was through the second sale that she was delivered into the hands of Captain John Ingham and his wife. Moreover, had she not been a baby on the occasion of the first sale, she might have been separated from her mother then. Practicality was probably the only force which prevented such a separation: it may have been judged wise to purchase the infant Mary and her mother together.

That some proprietors knew of this effect is noted in the above examples, and it is clear that proprietors used this in their disputes with bondservants. Faithful slaves could be protected by a will from arbitrary sale, as was noted above in the Tucker example. Defiant bondservants, however, could be sold or threatened with sale. The 'politics' of sale was reflected in the action taken against a 'Negro wench' by her proprietor in the Spring of 1799. She was described as valuable by the advertisement, and guaranteed to be "... as good a Washer,

starcher, ironer, cook, rubber and scowerer as is in the island...". Her only flaw was the cause of her sale: "...she is sold for no other fault only that of her not obeying her mistress."¹¹¹ Stephen Outerbridge of Bailey's Bay, Hamilton parish, advertised in the local newspaper on March 20, 1824, the sale of his "...healthy young Negro woman." This sale was because of what he called "...her disobedience to her present owner." He went even further: "Also for Sale her two Children- one a Boy, about 9 years; the other a Girl, about 6."¹¹² Finally, Sarah Darrell in essence threatened Bob, a seventeen year old 'Negro' boy with sale who had absconded from her: "N.B. If the said Bob does not come home before Thursday next of his own accord, he is then offered for sale".¹¹³ Paradoxically, she had threatened ship owners with "... the severity the Law inflicts in such cases..." if they took him off the islands.¹¹⁴

The logical extension of sale was transportation: slaves exposed to sale could often be bought by itinerant buyers skulking around the auction blocks where slaves were hawked by the vendue master. Also, slaves could simply be sold to persons overseas. Some contemporary commentators seemed to believe that the transportation of slaves was not uncommon. Governor John Pitt was quoted to have remarked in 1730 (subsequent to the poison plots) that "...the Blacks are *often* transported." [italics added]¹¹⁵. Alured Popple, in a letter sent within a year of his arrival, repeated the views of his predecessor: "Many Slaves are *exported from*, but none are imported to Bermuda." [emphasis added]¹¹⁶

Conversely, some proprietors did seek to prevent the possibility of transportation-sale, again often as a reward for 'faithful service'; and it underscored the value placed on such a dispensation. Frances Tucker, in 1732, did

instruct that three of her slaves (beyond having a choice of masters from among her siblings) were not "...to be Transported of [sic] this Island."¹¹⁷ But the bondswoman Roxanna was not so protected by her proprietor. A 'Negro woman', she and her child had been the slaves of Martha Burrows Esten, a St. Georgian of local elite connections. Esten had arranged, by July 1751, that Roxanna and her child be given to William Reason. Reason was then living in Georgetown, Maryland. William Smith, a mariner, sailed them both to Maryland, where Reason eventually sold them to John Gambrel of Farley Creek in Maryland, at £50 for the two.¹¹⁸

Concerning other methods of controlling bondservants, the narrative of Mary Prince outlined the full range of attacks proprietors could indulge in. Prince noted, regarding Mary Ingham (her third and joint-owner), that she had "...caused me to know the exact difference between the smart of the rope, the cart-whip, and the cow skin when applied to my naked back by her own cruel hand."¹¹⁹ Prince recalled how she was punched in the face and head by Mrs. Ingham, a punishment she characterised as "...more dreadful..." than the others Ingham inflicted. She further described how two boys owned by the Ingham family consistently experienced this type of beating. One boy was introduced above: Jack, whom Prince described as "...an African from the coast of Guinea...".¹²⁰ The second was Cyrus, recalled by Prince as "...a mulatto... who had been bought while an infant in his mother's arms." She observed: "Seldom a day passed without these boys receiving the most severe treatment, and often for no fault at all."¹²¹

She continued:

Both my master and mistress seemed to think that they had a right to ill-use them at their pleasure; and very often accompanied their commands with blows, whether the children were behaving well or ill. I have seen their flesh ragged and raw with licks.- Lick- lick- they were never secure one moment from a blow, and their lives were passed in continual fear. My mistress was not contented with using the whip, but often pinched their cheeks and arms in the most cruel manner.¹²²

Nonetheless, the more optimistic evaluator of Bermudian slavery, Alexander Ewing, wrote in his letter to the Bishop of London in June 1791: "It is allowed by all who know America and the West Indies, that the slaves are no where so well treated as in Bermuda. But even in Bermuda (such is the condition of servitude) no farther provision is made for the well being of slaves, than the interest of the owners is concerned." He added: "They are neither fully defended against cruel treatment from their owners, if their owners have a mind to inflict it on them..."¹²³

The job of administering corporal punishment for the colonial government (often on behalf of the proprietor) fell mostly on the constable or anyone appointed by the sheriff or public executioner. It also fell on the 'jumper'. This individual was so called, according to Packwood, for a dubious personal achievement: "...[h]e had refined the delivery of the lashes to such an art that each stroke was guaranteed to make a slave jump in pain".¹²⁴ The job became institutionalised early in the 1700s as an office, as noted in a law reproduced by Packwood. It outlined the office holder's mandate:

'...every Person taking upon himself the Office of the Jumper, or to punish Slaves, shall on every Occasion either at the Discretion of the Justice [of the Peace] or the request of the Owner or Possessor of any Slave, be obliged to punish such Slave; and in default of a jumper, every Constable of these Islands, being so called upon to punish any such Slaves, Shall be obliged to give his attendance and inflict punishment accordingly.'¹²⁵

The 'jumper', or constable acting in his stead, received a fee for the

'work'. Packwood noted that the threat of being sent to this individual was used by proprietors in their conflicts with bondservants.¹²⁶

Manumission, finally, was the all important carrot in the arsenal of proprietor power. Yet, the use of this incentive was persistently undermined by the legislative expulsion of free 'blacks'. The use of manumission was noted in the example of John Peasely's will above: the promise of freedom dangled in such a way as to ensure servile obedience. A slave, gazing at this possibility of manumission, was obliged to become a slave in the strict sense of the term to attain it. This was the obvious paradox of the manumission process.

Conclusion

Henry Wilkinson suggested that Bermuda's eighteenth-century economy was in a condition of perpetual malaise. Documentary evidence does suggest (beyond the view of economic stasis offered by Greene and Harbecke-Metz) that while this was broadly true, the economy had still experienced some growth: it was slight, and it was unable to alter the local balance of trade crisis, but it was growth nonetheless. Plait assisted in this early economic growth, and at its decline, it was replaced by the sale of ships and the carrying trade. The trading of ships and the commercial linkages with ports throughout the Americas constituted a large portion of Bermuda's 'maritime revolution'.

This 'revolution', thus, transformed Bermudian merchants into international traders, who were obliged to deal with a variety of tongues (Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch and Danish, etc.) as easily as they had been obliged to

deal in a variety of currencies. It made them 'international men', a part of the multi-national American trading system. They met various types of people from merchants, privateers, pirates and bondservants, in the innumerable hidden coves, and at crowded Caribbean and North American ports. They also stood to be exposed to a variety of ideas.

Those who were involved in the maritime trade itself were a fraction of the participants in the economy; and they were also a minority of 'white' men. But there was still the attraction of many 'white' men to the sea trade. This attraction, along with deaths at sea and large-scale male emigration, resulted in a 'white' female majority that of necessity forced changes in the land-holding customs: many 'white' women, though not disproportionate to 'white' men, found themselves the recipients of landed, moveable and human property.

Yet for the 'blacks', the sea trade provided an important opportunity to mollify both the proprietor expropriation and the problematic Bermuda economy. Within Bermuda's society, it provided possibilities for those 'Negroes' and 'mulattos' involved in the maritime economy to secretly accumulate surplus. Through this they constituted one of the class contradictions examined in the following chapters.

Endnotes: Chapter II

¹ Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: the Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 152-3.

² Cara Anne Harbeck Metz, "Wealth in Bermuda in the Eighteenth Century: A View from the Probate Inventories of the Colonial Capital of St. George's", *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History*, 6 (1994), p. 108.

³ She argued: "There are thirteen volumes of wills and inventories in the Bermuda archives, spanning the years 1648-1799...[T]he fact there are only slightly more than one thousand wills for this 150 year period (an average of seven per year), in addition to a comparable number of inventories for different people, suggests that the documents are of limited value for quantification. There are too few to project or reflect accurately the economic stratification of the island community, particularly since they cannot be corroborated with other quantifiable data such as colony-wide or parish tax assessments." Elaine Forman Crane, "The Socioeconomics of a Female Majority in Eighteenth-Century Bermuda", *Signs*, 15:21 (Winter 1990), p. 240.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁶ Wilkinson, *Bermuda in the Old Empire*, p. 96. Wilkinson offers c.1722, connected to a shrinkage of trade, coincidental with the arrival of John Hope as governor: the first governor to give a pessimistic view of the archipelago's economic prospects.

⁷ CO 37 12, p. 93.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹¹ CO 37 13, p. 185.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 184.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 184-5.

¹⁸ The name of the person in question is obscured in the document, but appears to be 'Heine'. No sex is given. Another is also given, and equally, the name is obscured. Both were valued at £8 and £6 respectively. See BW 1695-1700, v.2 pt. 1, p. 209. Lefroy also provided a list of names which he seems to suggest applied to all 'non-white' populations. He noted: "The term mustee = mestizo or mestizo, having been frequently used without comment, it may be here explained there were four degrees of colour- black; half-black or mulatto; quarter-black or quadroon; one eighth black or mustee. The offspring of a mustee and white were white by law...". *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, pp. 389-90.

¹⁹ This is in reference to Venter, owned by James Browne of St. George's. Venter is recorded in the inventory of Browne as a 'Madagascar man', valued at £12 (on Sept. 24, 1708). See BW 1707-13, v. 4, p. 26.

²⁰ AZ-102-6, 1726-35, p. 221.

²¹ EXCO 1722-34, p. 174.

²² BW 1718-33, vol. 6, p. 129.

²³ BW 1734-44, vol. 7, p. 118.

²⁴ Crane, "Socioeconomics of a Female Majority," p. 240.

²⁵ Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 71-2.

²⁶ CO 37 13, pp. 18-9.

²⁷ Crane, "Socioeconomics of a Female Majority," p. 237.

²⁸ The 350 is subtracted from the 875 'black' girls (of 1749). This equals 525. Then the 525 is subtracted from 1031 'black' girls (of 1756). This would produce a surplus of 506 'black' girls, beyond the 136 noted as the number the 'black' girl group increased by between 1749 and 1756.

²⁹ *The History of Mary Prince*, pp. 55-6.

³⁰ Crane, "The Socioeconomics of a Female Majority," p. 237.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

- ³² The lowest sex ratio for 'black' adults recorded was .71, in the year 1749. Ibid., p. 237.
- ³³ Ibid., p. 237.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p. 237.
- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 236.
- ³⁶ Ibid., pp. 240-1.
- ³⁷ BW 1713-18, p. 49.
- ³⁸ Crane, "The Socioeconomics of a Female Majority," p. 239.
- ³⁹ Ibid., pp. 236, 238.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 245.
- ⁴¹ BW 1713-18, p. 139.
- ⁴² Michael Jarvis, "The Fastest Vessels in the World: The Origin and Evolution of the Bermuda Sloop, 1620-1800", *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History*, 7 (1995), p. 45.
- ⁴³ CO 37 13, p. 185.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 185.
- ⁴⁵ Rob Napier, "The Bermuda Sloop circa 1740", *Nautical Research Journal* 30 (1984), p. 170.
- ⁴⁶ George Berkeley, *A Proposal for the Better Supplying of Churches in Our Foreign Plantations, and for Converting the Savage Americans to Christianity, by a College to be erected in the Summer Islands, Otherwise called the Isles of Bermuda* (Dublin: George Grierson, 1725), p. 197.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 197.
- ⁴⁸ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *Masters, Passengers, Sailors from Bermuda, 1708-1720*, c398, passim.
- ⁴⁹ Cornelius Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791*, ed. Maria J.L. van Ypren, (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1985), p. 205.
- ⁵⁰ CO 37 13, p. 186.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., p. 186.
- ⁵² Ibid., p. 186.
- ⁵³ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, p. 465.
- ⁵⁴ Henry C. Wilkinson, *Bermuda in the Old Empire: a history of the island from the dissolution of the Somers Island Company until the end of the American Revolutionary War, 1684-1784* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 50-1.
- ⁵⁵ CO 23 15, p. 60.
- ⁵⁶ CO 37 13, p. 185.
- ⁵⁷ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *Journals of Assembly, 1759-1762*, Dec. 2, 1761.
- ⁵⁸ Robinson, *Heritage*, p. 12.
- ⁵⁹ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 13.
- ⁶⁰ On the negative views of sailors, see Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: merchant seamen, pirates, and the Anglo-American maritime world, 1700-1750*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 153-4, 165, 191, 293. Governor Henry Hamilton, toward the end of the eighteenth century, recalled that the 'whites' viewed praedial labour as 'highly degrading' and that "...even the black people speak contemptuously of their own color who do not go to Sea, or at least employ themselves in fishing or wrecking." Henry Hamilton to the Bishop of London, St. Georges, Bermuda, May 20th, 1790, Fulham Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, vol. 17, pp. 51-4.
- ⁶¹ David Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels: a study of master-slave relations in Antigua with implications for colonial British America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1985), p. 81.
- ⁶² Harbecke-Metz, "Wealth in Bermuda in the Eighteenth Century", p. 100.
- ⁶³ Richard S. Dunn, "The downfall of the Bermuda Company: a restoration farce", *William and Mary Quarterly*, XX: 4 (October 1963), passim.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 511.
- ⁶⁵ Wilkinson, *Bermuda in the Old Empire*, p. 165.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 165.
- ⁶⁷ CO 37 6.
- ⁶⁸ CO 37 4, p. 8.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 8.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 8.
- ⁷¹ CO 37 13, pp. 186-7.
- ⁷² Ibid., p. 187.
- ⁷³ CO 37 4, p. 8.

- ⁷⁴ UK. Public Records Office. *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series America and West Indies, 1704-1705*, edited by Cecil Headlam (London: HMSO/Hereford Times, 1916), p. 440.
- ⁷⁵ Gaspar, *Bondsmen and Rebels*, passim.
- ⁷⁶ Wilkinson, *Bermuda in the Old Empire*, p. 205. Wrote Wilkinson: "He chaffed the Assembly for their ignorance of parliamentary procedure, their illogical deductions, their recondite phrases, their solecisms, their sheer ignorance even of 'grammar or the construction of words', their resort to the pulpit to take their petty part, their belief in anything Noden might say without verifying a word. 'There are', said he, 'none so blind as those that will not see.'"
- ⁷⁷ CO 37 19, p. 54.
- ⁷⁸ *Journals of Assembly, 1759-1762*, Dec. 17, 1760.
- ⁷⁹ Wilkinson, *Bermuda in the Old Empire*, p. 212.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 206.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 210. Wrote Wilkinson: "But for Popple personally, the climax of lawlessness was to find that one of the soldiers on the Parade had, in the presence of several people, been offered £10 to shoot him through the head, and this offer was from the Honourable Cornelius Hinson, Speaker of the House, in person." It is doubtful many on the Board of Trade and Plantations would have disagreed with the governor's assessment.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 209-12. At least one official attempted to exploit the situation. Nathaniel Butterfield, a member of the Governor's Council and general of the island militia was also the colonial treasurer. He thus, to quote presumably William Popple, had a "... 'very strong, but very bad reason to keep the Assembly and executive at variance.'" That is, as long as the crisis continued, the non-disbursed monies remained in his hands. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
- ⁸³ *Journals of Assembly 1759-62*, December 2, 1761.
- ⁸⁴ QUART, pp. 816-7.
- ⁸⁵ CO 40 9, pp. 15-6.
- ⁸⁶ *The Rich Papers*, pp. 331-2.
- ⁸⁷ BCR II, PA 2129, 72/61.
- ⁸⁸ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *A Journal of the Votes and Proceedings of the General Assembly of these Islands 19th July to 25th April 1770*, November 30, 1763.
- ⁸⁹ Hudson Strode, *The Story of Bermuda* (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, 1932), p. 227.
- ⁹⁰ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 76.
- ⁹¹ Wilfred Brenton Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution: 1760-1783* (New Jersey: Anchor Books, 1969), pp. 8-9.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, passim.
- ⁹³ Henry Hamilton to the Bishop of London, St. Georges, Bermuda, May 20th, 1790, Fulham Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, vol. 17, pp. 51-4.
- ⁹⁴ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *Acts of Assembly, made and Enacted in Bermuda or Summer Islands continued to 1736* (London: John Baskett, 1738), p. 96.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- ⁹⁶ AZ 102-6, pp. 409-10.
- ⁹⁷ Crane, "Female Majority in Bermuda," p. 243; Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 62.
- ⁹⁸ Crane, "Female Majority in Bermuda," pp. 243-4.
- ⁹⁹ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 62.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 62.
- ¹⁰¹ BW 1713-1718, vol. 5, p. 185.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 196-7.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- ¹⁰⁵ BW 1718-33, v. 6, p. 4.
- ¹⁰⁶ BW 1734-44, vol. 7, p. 84.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- ¹⁰⁸ Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince: a West Indian slave, related by herself*, edited by Moira Ferguson (London: Pandora, 1987), p. 47.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.
- ¹¹¹ *Bermuda Gazette*, Saturday, April 6, 1799.
- ¹¹² *Ibid.*, Saturday, March 20, 1824.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ CO 37 12, p. 93.

¹¹⁶ CO 37 13, pp. 18-9.

¹¹⁷ BW 1734-44, v. 7, p. 95.

¹¹⁸ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *Bills, Bonds and Protests, 1739-1766*, vol. 9, pp. 98-9.

¹¹⁹ Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, p. 66. The cow skin was a piece of cow hide twisted extremely tightly so that it produced jagged pointed extensions all along its surface. Upon descent the extensions would catch the skin and break it open along the path of its contact. As wounds would keloid for some, it was responsible for the criss-cross pattern often seen on the back of chastised bondservants, and remarked of on Mary Prince's back.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 56.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 56.

¹²² Ibid., p. 56.

¹²³ Alexander Ewing to the Bishop of London, June 14, 1791, Fulham Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, vol. 17, p. 59.

¹²⁴ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 137.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 137.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 137.

Chapter III

Forces and Contradictions: Enslaved Africans

"You don't know what I mean, but I know what I mean"

The deposition of Mrs. Martha Stoaks [read: Stokes] and her friend Mrs. Elizabeth Corbet, given in the year 1721, recalled a notable incident. It began when a 'Negro' bondsman named Coffey approached Mrs. Stoaks on her property in St. David's, asking to buy some 'watermillons'. But negotiations broke down when Stoaks refused him, "...Denying to let him have any without money...". Coffey was then to have retorted: "...when he had the said Martha Stoaks house for his own, he Should [have] Watermillons for nothing...". Elizabeth Corbet, overhearing the conversation, asked him just how this was to happen, to which he was alleged to have replied: "...you don't know what I mean, but I know what I mean."¹

Few vignettes highlight the issues of this section clearer than this strange confrontation between Coffey and Martha Stoaks. Coffey himself appears to embody, literally, two of the issues that will be examined in this chapter. He *might* have been an African and, specifically, a 'Gold Coast' African: his name is phonetically analogous to some West African weekday names for 'Friday'. 'Coffey' and its many versions are ubiquitous features in eighteenth-century records of Caribbean slavery. He was a bondsman: he and his proprietor, the widow Martha Trott, lived in Hamilton Tribe, a Tribe that formed the terminating boundary for the great Castle Harbour. It was in crossing this body of water that

Coffey reached the island of St. David's, and began his illustrative encounter with Mrs. Martha Stoaks.

When local slavery collided with the maritime economy the, in reality, incestuous union produced two potentially contradictory classes: the African slave and the sailor merchant slave. Without the latter, the sudden emergence of revolutionary design out of years of 'quietude' would remain largely inexplicable, if not unanticipated. To the same extent, without the 'Gold Coast' African, much in the development of early eighteenth-century poisoning resistance would seem strange and unprecedented. Both of these classes would unify to forge the Conspiracy of 1761; and with it, they would marry revolutionary intention to poisoning methodology. The next chapter will detail the second of these contradictions; but this chapter is devoted to the first: to an examination of the enslaved African- the 'Gold Coast' African- in Bermuda.

I. Arguments for an African 'Gold Coast' Influence

From tradition: the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century African entry into Bermuda

It had been noted that, since the early 1600s, the purchases dominating the bills of sale involved 'Negroes', 'Indians', and 'mulattos' captured from within the Caribbean.² From the 1660s, however, a group arriving from a different source entered the local demography. As was described in the Introduction, the commander of the ship called the *Charles*, John Wentworth, launched a raid against the Dutch colony of Tortola. Wentworth's attack led him to carry away seventy 'Negroes' and one 'Indian'. The Somers Island Company confiscated the group from Wentworth upon arrival in Bermuda,³ though his crew sold the other captives taken to local planters.⁴

It was with the arrival of these 'Tortola Negroes' that a major and definite shift toward a population containing some Africans seems to have occurred. The group contained three with names of unquestioned African derivation: Corabare, Moma, and Macaco.⁵ Corabare appears to have departed from Calabar/the Calabars. This position is supported by the contextual evidence of Dutch presence in the Bight of Biafra during the seventeenth century, as well as the tendency of the Dutch West India Company to send its least desired captives to the Caribbean Islands. Tortola would have been a recipient of Calabar captives: captives from the Bight were viewed as undesirable by Spanish planters whom the Old Dutch West Indian Company was trying to placate.⁶ Linguistic data show how 'r' and 'l' in especially 'Slave Coast' languages were confused in English: *Aradra* ↔ *Allada* can

be offered as the most prominent example of this tendency.⁷

The man called Corabare was, at least according to the records, 'lett out' [read: 'rented'] by the Admiralty, after his confiscation, to Anthony White. This was on condition that White provided Corabare with food and clothing and returned him to the 'colony lands' when requested by the sheriff. As the implication of the agreement suggests that he was still owned by the colony, Corabare may in fact be the Calabar who is recorded to have died during the government of Richard Cony.⁸

Moma may have been from the 'Gold Coast'. Her name phonetically approaches the abbreviated female 'Gold Coast'/Akan day name meaning 'Saturday': [A]memé[newa].⁹ Although the Dutch were more concerned with gold trading than slave trading along the 'Gold Coast' during the period of her arrival in Tortola (to be discussed below), a number of people were nonetheless sold from this area. Moma appears in the bills of sales records as 'lett out' by the Admiralty to Gyles Marsh after she (like Corabare) was confiscated from Wentworth. This was in August 1665, and under the exact conditions governing the 'renting' of Corabare's labour. She later appears, it can be argued again, as Momo "... an old Negro Woman lett out by the Sheriffe..." in the list of "Slaves now in the Governors possession"; and her name is in a separate listing in which Calabar's name appears. Significantly, those recorded in this group had either been sold, died, or in some way were not physically on 'Colony' lands. Notes describing their fates were appended to their names: Corabare, as noted, was described as having "...died in Coll. Cony's time." Momo was probably listed among them because she had been 'lett out' or rented by the sheriff at the time of the enumeration.¹⁰

Finally, Macaco was probably from the Angola/Kongo area. Macaco, described in the bills of sale as a 'Negro boy', was rented to Samuel Smith, in terms as those governing the rental of Moma and Corabare.¹¹ Macaco may have also been the son of Shikane, a 'Negro' woman enumerated with him in the bills of sale, and 'rented' along with him to Samuel Smith.¹² Concerning the 'Negro' child's origins, Macaco's name is the same as that of a river in 'Lower Guinea'. The Macaco river was recorded in a *circa* seventeenth-century map as east of Loango and immediately north of the kingdom of the Kongo.¹³ A situation similar to that of Popelo of Somesenta may explain why the boy and the river share the same name. Moreover, according to Johannes Postma, sixteen ships of the Old Dutch West India Company carried 25% of the corporation's African captives from Loango between 1658 and 1674: 7,339 people out of a grand total of 52,680. It was the second largest provider of captives to the Dutch (excluding those captives whose origins were unknown). Loango was listed as only after the 'Slave Coast' in its provision of people for American enslavement (1658 and 1674): the 'Slave Coast' provided 40.8% of the total number of captives. Significantly, given what was written of Momo/Moma, 18.3% had left from the 'Gold Coast', making it the third largest source of supply for the Dutch between 1658 and 1674. The Bight of Biafra only provided the Dutch West India Company with 2,581 captives, 8.7% of the total for these years.¹⁴

When Bermudians began constructing and manning their own sailing vessels after the dissolution of the Somers Island Company, the territories to the south of the colony still remained the main, though not exclusive, sources of

supply. Yet Cyril Packwood noted three direct expeditions by Bermudians to West Africa: two to 'Collebar' (Calabar) in the Bight of Benin (1679 and 1692 respectively) and one to the Gambia.¹⁵ He argued that out of the 125 captives taken in the first expedition, half were sold in Bermuda: "...the rest reshipped to Carolina."¹⁶ Carolina and Virginia were also the destinations of the bulk of the 90 captives taken from Calabar in that second expedition, but only a few remained in Bermuda. The 'importation' of Africans is indicative of their perceived increasing importance to the expansion of the tobacco agriculture in North America.¹⁷

Nonetheless, in the eighteenth century, outside of the designs by the Royal African Company to send its human purchases to Bermuda, Governor Benjamin Bennett had expressed the opinion that no captives were sent from Africa to the colony. According to Packwood:

Governor Bennett reported to Whitehall, on 4 August 1708, neither the Royal African Company nor individual traders had imported slaves directly from Africa, since 24 June 1698 to 25 December 1707.¹⁸

However, as Packwood noted, Bennett had (curiously) left out one group sent to Bermuda during his government. The Royal African Company had commissioned a Bermudian, the Assemblyman Captain Daniel Johnson, to sail to the Company fort at James Island on the Gambia River. Carolina, again, became the place where half of the captives were sent. The rest were sent to Bermuda.¹⁹ If one assumes that the entire contingent of 200 captives (the number the brigantine asked for was designed to carry)²⁰ arrived at their first port of call in Turks Island (with half sent to North America) roughly 90 to 100 Africans would have found their way to Bermuda.²¹ Bennett, incidentally, had been promised something of a personal nature from the expedition. The factor at James fort, Humphrey Chishull,

requested a boy to be sent to the governor "...having promised him One...". This 'boy' was to accompany a request that Bennett lift his embargo: the embargo had been lowered on all vessels servicing Bermuda as part of the governor's defence preparations for the 'War of the Spanish Succession'.²²

Nevertheless, one can hypothesise that *at least* between 90 and 100 Africans were in Bermuda during the early eighteenth century. Moreover, a disproportionate number of this group can be said, with some confidence, to have been from Senegambia. If South Carolina planter prejudices swayed the decision-making process at James Fort, this group was easily constituted by either Bambara or Malinké.²³

During the 1700s, when the colonial Assembly in Bermuda and the governor-in-council passed the *Act Laying an Imposition on Negroes and Other Slaves Imported into these Islands* (1728), they gave further implicit acknowledgement that natural increase was not the only factor sustaining and expanding the numbers of 'blacks' in the colony. The intention of the legislation (better appreciated within the context of the arrests of alleged poison conspirators), loosely resembled that of the Somers Island Company order of the 1670s. Its eighteenth-century version gave the government an opportunity to increase its revenues and collect statistics on the structure of slave arrivals, 'imports' or otherwise. Of the nine 'Negroes' enumerated by Governor John Pitt between 1729 and 1730, all but two were noted as having departed either from Barbados or Jamaica:

Table 15.— Enumeration Regarding the 'Negro Tax'

Date	No. of 'Negroes'	Ship	Place of Origin
Oct.21/1729	2	<i>Loyal Heart</i>	Barbados
Nov.13/1729	1	<i>Elizabeth</i>	N/A
Nov.13/1729	2	<i>Neptune</i>	Barbados
Mar.5/1730	2	<i>Anne</i>	Jamaica
Mar.5/1730	1	<i>Anne</i>	Jamaica
Mar.11/1730	1	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	9		

Source: CO 37 12, pp. 142-9.

Such was the official record. But given the problem of smuggling, these statistics of foreign arrivals must clearly be judged as insufficient. Moreover, the accounts do not tell us of African origins: this is particularly important in establishing the view of a 'Gold Coast' influence on Bermuda demography and resistance. Yet, to understand the factors facilitating 'Gold Coast' influences, it is necessary to begin from African/'Gold Coast' historical circumstances.

"All the world was spoilt": the African context

There was, in the eighteenth century, a sudden and dramatic expansion in the number of 'Gold Coast' captives sent to the British Caribbean. This demographic phenomenon owes its development not only to changes in the 'demand-side' but to important politico-economic changes on the 'supply-side': to the multifarious African kingdoms, confederations, and republics along the 'Gold

Coast' faced with changes in European commercial demands. Central to changes in demand was the conversion of 'Gold Coast' economies from predominantly trading in gold and salt to predominantly trading prisoners-of-war and civilians. The year 1700 can be viewed as the watershed year for this conversion.

The whole period before 1700 seemed to constitute for this region a 'Golden Age', both literally and figuratively. While some states (like the empire of Akwamu) sold people to Europeans, many *imported* labour into the coast: to staff lucrative 'Gold Coast' gold, salt, and ivory enterprises there. The Portuguese were the first to act as middlemen, and often transported peoples from other areas of West Africa to help offset the relative population-sparseness of the more coastal parts. These captives and others were quickly assimilated into the countries of the region, and contributed to the cultural diversity of a few 'Gold Coast' states.²⁴

The contrast between developments before and after the eighteenth-century watershed must be noted: for before this period, the increasing expansion of the economies of newly established 'Gold Coast' communities was clear. 'Gold Coast' merchants used the rivalries between Europeans to lower the prices European traders demanded for imports. Indeed, some countries enjoyed a balance of trade surplus at the expense of the Europeans. Before the Dutch removed the private trader, who had been exacerbating their trading difficulties along the coast, African 'Gold Coast' merchants had been selling Guinea-mined gold at two ounces for 70 or 80 pounds of European copper. This excluded the value of the nearly as profitable sale of elephant tusks and salt. With the creation of the first Dutch West Indian Company monopoly, this balance of trade began to shift to the Dutch: 2 ounces of gold were then worth 35 pounds of copper in 1623.²⁵ Still,

from 1623 to 1646, the amount of gold exported to the United Provinces equalled 40,461 marks worth 12 million guilders.²⁶ Between 1655 and 1675, in spite of an expanding need by Dutch and other sugar planters for slaves, gold worth 31,000 marks or 8.5 million guilders was exported.²⁷ Much of Dutch gold supplies continued to be imported from the 'Gold Coast' as late as the 1700s.

But, again, the obvious major reason for 'Gold Coast' economic and demographic expansion pre-1700 lay in the fact that gold and salt exports would *dominate* in the trade- and not the socially and politically deleterious sale of human beings. Although historians (and diachronic anthropologists) like Walter Rodney, W.A. Richards, and Margaret Field spoke of 'extensive' Akwamu enslaving expeditions before 1700, they also noted the radical expansion in the exportation of human beings occurring after that year. To them also, it constituted a major watershed in the lives of 'Gold Coast' peoples.²⁸ Richards, for example, had offered 1658 to 1700 as a period of slave-trading generally along the 'Gold Coast', yet found himself quoting evidence that clearly pointed to a post-1700 expansion of that trade. He cited a Dutch factor writing to his masters at the Dutch West India Company headquarters:

'Concerning the trade on the coast, we notified your Honours already that it has completely changed into a Slave Coast, and that the natives nowadays no longer occupy themselves with the search for gold, but make war on each other to furnish slaves, nay, go to the extent of violating the public roads.' [italics added]²⁹

Rodney located the cause of this conversion in three factors, but one was the most important: the increase in European demand alongside the transference of English slave-trading activities from Agaja Trudo's 'Slave Coast' to the 'Gold Coast'- due, *inter alia*, to the restrictions Dahomey had placed on this trade. The

Royal African Company already had gold and minor slave-trading commerce at Temma, Nungwa/Ningo, and Succo (in the 1700s, these cities were under Akwamu control) and at Kromantin. Its merchants were in a strong position to create demand and they did. Yet, this conversion created a problem for the Dutch dependant on 'Gold Coast' gold exports. Disorganised slave trading of the type Dahomey sought to prevent in its regions, while a problem for the Dutch along the 'Gold Coast', was clearly not a problem for the English. This was particularly so after 1713 when they, through the South Sea Company, secured the *asiento*: indeed, a problem of a different nature had arisen. The *asiento* allowed the English to sell captives for the gold of the Spanish American mines. But they were obliged to increase the volume of captive exports not only to offset the human losses in the British colonial plantations, but also to pay for purchases of minerals and keep up with the demands of the *asiento* quota. African merchants helped to meet the demand: "For a male slave", Rodney argued, "the English were offering merchandise to the value of nearly three ounces of gold..."; and he quoted a frustrated Dutch factor as declaring that "...the Negroes seeing this now pay more attention to the slave trade than to the gold trade, as they do better by it."³⁰

The Euro-American (and specifically Anglo-American) demand for cheap labour was paid for primarily through the sale of guns. These sales and the trade itself had the effect of stimulating an arms race along the West African coast. W.A. Richards quoted historian J.E. Inikori as having estimated that between 283,000 and 394,000 guns had been imported by West African merchants per year, from 1750 to 1807.³¹ The historian Ivor Wilks noted how the empire of Akwamu in 1703 "...possessed such an array of cannon that Sir Dalby Thomas thought the

days of the European forts might be over."³² Again, the difference between slave trading before and after 1700 was one of degree: before, 1700, the number of people sold from the coast was far less than the larger number sold afterwards.

The effect on the 'Gold Coast', in terms of socio-political order, was devastating; for the whole of the coast, an insecurity had descended. Fear of being kidnapped and sold to the Europeans severely limited travel along the public roads. Trade thus could only be safely done in large heavily armed groups, feeding further the gun-for-men trade. Gã farmers were unable to work in their fields without the persistent fear of kidnapping by marauding slavers. They were obliged to travel in groups to cities far from the Accra regions to purchase produce, which still exposed them to kidnapping. As one would expect, these developments had a profound effect on military and political psychology. Moreover, the wide-spread break down of the 'Gold Coast' in general, and the eighteenth-century Asante Wars in particular, resulted in large numbers of Fante being imported to the Americas in the 1700s. The fruits of the drive for enslaved labour would ripen in the Americas as Fante/Akan dominated acts of violent, and often revolutionary, resistance.

The 'Gold Coast' influence on Caribbean demography

It was the Treaty of Rijswick, which ended the 'Nine Years War' between

France and England (allied to the Dutch) in 1697; and it gave to the French control of the western portion of Hispaniola. By that means, Saint-Domingue was created. It put the French within a few miles, for the first time, of Bermudian-settled Turks Island; and it gave Bermudians both a new *rescate* trading partner and a potential source of wealth in times of military conflict. It also, of course, put a potential enemy close to Bermudian sources of wealth and security. Four years after this, the French government managed to negotiate the *asiento* with Spain, thereby becoming the chief supplier of African captives to the whole of Hispaniola and Spanish colonial territories. It would hold on to this *asiento* until 1713, when the English were awarded it.³³ It is with all of this in view that the opinion of Philip Curtin takes on a greater cogency:

A colony that imported heavily in the early part of the eighteenth century would receive a correspondingly high proportion of Akan peoples from the southern Gold Coast, and of Fon and Gun from southern Dahomey. Another, which may have received its largest numbers in the 1790s and later, would have drawn more heavily on the Ibo and their neighbours and on Bantu-speaking peoples from the hinterland of Angola.³⁴

Beginning with Saint-Domingue, the high death and low birth rates of the enslaved population made the French colony highly dependent on African arrivals, fifty percent of whom would not survive the initial period of enslavement.³⁵ As late as the 1780s and 1790s, 60% to 70% of the slaves and two out of three of the adult enslaved populations had been born in Africa. Thus only 30% to 40% of its population was Creole.³⁶

Whatever the proportions, the captives entering Saint-Domingue from 'Lower Guinea' would have included some traditionally 'Gold Coast' groups such as the Gã: many Gã had fled to a district in the 'Slave Coast' city of Little Popo, as well as other adjacent areas, during the late 1670s and early 1680s. Bermudians

had an opportunity of access, through Saint-Domingue, to captives from the 'Slave Coast' and Kongo-Angola countries: to groups such as Ewe, Ba-Kongo, Ovimbundu and Gã. If the politics of the Kongo and Dahomey were shaping Saint-Domingue resistance movements, there was some opportunity for some of their influence to be felt in Bermuda. Nonetheless, what is important to the argument of 'Gold Coast' contributions is how access to Saint-Domingue's captives would have made possible Bermudian access to Gã: to a population which was properly from the 'Gold Coast'; and this access was available early in the 1700s.

Bermudian trading in the Dutch colonies, especially in St. Eustatius and Saba, made it possible for Bermudian servile demography to be shaped by Dutch supplies of captives. The shift from predominantly gold-importing to predominantly slave-importing Dutch-'Gold Coast' commercial relations saw a change in the proportions of captives imported into Dutch colonies.

Table 16.— Regional Origins of Africans in the Dutch Slave Trade, 1675 to 1795

<i>Period</i>	<i>Loango-Angola</i>	<i>'Slave Coast'</i>	<i>'Gold Coast'</i>	<i>'Ivory Coast'</i>	<i>'Windward Coast'</i>
1675-1700	19000	35900	2000	Nil	nil
%	34	64	2	Nil	nil
1710-1735	35300	36000	25600	10500	4200
%	31	32	23	9	4
1736-1795	58100	1900	16500	84600	33200
%	24	1	26	35	14

Source: Johannes Menne Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) page 49.

However, it is obvious that English supplies of African captives would

have been the most accessed by Bermudian merchants. The occasional 'white' migration traffic between Bermuda, Turks Island, the British Leewards and Barbados also meant slave immigration between these areas. It was this that the spirits behind the 'Negro tax' had a mind to regulate.³⁷

Regarding their own importation of slaves, Philip Curtin argued that Barbadians and Jamaicans in particular were getting the lion's share of slave exports, although for Barbados, it is clear that many were being re-exported elsewhere.³⁸

Table 17.— Distribution of African Captives in the Caribbean in the 1700s

Imported into:	Numbers	%
Barbados	26200	38.4
Jamaica	22900	33.6
Nevis	6900	10.1
other and unknown	12200	17.9
Totals	68200	100.0

Source: Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, Press, 1969) p. 122.

Nonetheless, taking Jamaica as an example, the shift from gold-predominance to slave-predominance in 'Gold Coast' exports had a clear resonance in the colony's imports of African captives:

Table 18.—Slaves Imported into Jamaica, 1655-1791

Origin	1655-1701	1702-25	1726-50	1751-75	1776-91
Senegambia	4200	6700	8600	1000	2600
%	4.8	10.5	6.7	0.6	2.1
Sierra Leone	800	4700	9200	(28500)	Nil
%	0.9	7.4	7.2	(16.5)	Nil
Windward Coast	11400	5100	11400	(28500)	Nil
%	12.9	7.9	8.9	(16.5)	Nil
Gold Coast	5500	22300	34700	67300	47100
%	6.3	34.8	27.1	39.0	38.3
Bight of Benin	24300	19500	16900	23800	18300
%	27.6	30.5	13.2	13.8	14.9
Bight of Biafra	6800	1000	27900	43300	49500
%	7.7	1.6	21.8	25.1	40.2
Central Africa	34800	4800	17700	8800	5500
%	39.5	7.5	13.8	5.1	4.5
Unknown	200	Nil	1700	nil	Nil
%	0.2	Nil	1.3	nil	Nil
Total	88000	64000	128000	172000	123100
annual average	19000	2700	5100	6900	7700

Source: Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, Press, 1969), p. 161.

By 1725, the contributions of captives from the 'Gold Coast' to Jamaica had more than quadrupled, from 6.3% (between 1655 and 1701) to 34.8% (between 1701 and 1725). Curtin, however, reminded his readers that Jamaica only took 25% of all the captives sold to the British Caribbean, particularly

between 1751 and 1790. Nonetheless, as a source of supply for Bermuda, Jamaican importers were in a position to provide 'Gold Coast' captives to Bermuda and influence the islands' slave demography.

Microscopic: Local Evidence of 'Gold Coast' Populations

Historians studying the origins of captives in the Caribbean generally have been fortunate to possess records detailing the structure of slave imports. These types of records, however, simply do not exist to the same extent for Bermuda. Moreover, there is the added problem that the national origins of 'blacks' were rarely if ever given. Nonetheless, clues have been sought after from wills, inventories and bills of sales records. The results were far more encouraging than preliminary examination would have allowed one to assume. Fortunately, populations from the 'Gold Coast' seemed to have been very insistent on transmitting in a variety of ways some aspects of their ethnic traditions: names and naming traditions were often retained. Indeed, the enslaved men and women from the 'Gold Coast' retained or utilised names in a variety of ways which allowed them to be identified either personally or collectively. Retained naming traditions offer strong clues to the pride and respect people from the 'Gold Coast' had for their regional traditions and institutions.

Two types of 'Gold Coast' names can be identified initially, namely 'place names' and 'weekday names'. Place-names offer two possibilities: the name of a person derived from the name (or the Anglicised corruption of the name) of the

port-city he or she was purchased from; and the name of a person taken from that of the *oman* (roughly meaning 'community' or 'polity') he or she had belonged. The first type may have been given through the acts of a purchaser, as was the case with Popelo of Somesenta: a name 'given' in this sense by a slave trader or slave purchaser.

Those who evaluated the property of William Greene of Paget in the summer of 1694 provided several examples. There was a 'Negro boy' listed named Ketah, who might have been quite young and was valued at £10. There were also Wynniare, another 'Negro' boy (declared to be worth £8), and Psiche, a 'Negro' girl valued at £7.³⁹ Analysis of the children's names can yield interesting conclusions. Wynniare suggests a corruption in English of the name of the coastal city of Winneba with the 'b' dropped. The dropping of syllables and elisions tended to occur in other 'Gold Coast' names recorded in European languages: the country of Alampi, for example, was transliterated into various European languages as Lay, Lembi ([A]lempi) and Alampae. One writer recalled how it was pronounced as Lē- bi (and thus Lē^{nmbi}) early in the 1600s, and as Alā-bi.⁴⁰ There was also the port city of Tema, located in a 1729 map of the region as along the eastern 'Gold Coast'. It was recorded as Tema or Tema[ni].⁴¹ Thus the name Wynniare becomes phonetically close to Winneba if one accepts the noted changes: Winneba → Winne^ba → Winnea → Winnear → 'Wynniare'. A historical context supports this hypothesis. Winneba (also called Wimba) was a coastal town out of which captives bound for the Americas left. Many departed for the British Caribbean, as the Royal African Company had a trading station there.⁴² Winneba/Wimba was located in the kingdom of Agona, a state conquered by the

expanding Akwamu empire in 1689. Although placed under indirect rule, the kingdom became incorporated into Akwamu's slave-trading policies.⁴³ Wynniare's appearance in the Bermuda records for 1694 would fit well within those events of the African context.

Determination of Ketah and Psiche is even more secure. Ketah is, by itself, phonetically parallel to the name of the city of Keta. Although Keta was located properly in the 'Slave Coast', it was situated on the coast of a lagoon which opened into the Volta River. It was thus in the neighbourhood of the 'Gold Coast'.⁴⁴ When Akwamu conquered the Gã republic of Accra in the 1680s, large numbers of its refugees fled across the Volta River to the 'Slave Coast'. Moreover, the eastern expansion of Akwamu around the 'Gold Coast' influenced neighbours of Keta; and the port city itself may have been in an alliance with Akwamu. Indeed, the relationship may have been stronger than that: Ivor Wilks recorded a contemporary opinion that stated that the "... 'nation (Keta) is in some sort of confederacy with that of Akwamu, which will now and then on occasion assist them with some forces in time of war.'"⁴⁵ Thus, the appearance of the name 'Keta' in a Bermuda inventory of 1694 has an appropriate historical context. Significantly, the name Keto also appears as the name of a 'Negro' man in the inventory of Devonshire Tribe inhabitant Thomas Parker (on August 21, 1700).⁴⁶ Nonetheless, earlier that year 'Keta' was recorded as the name of a 'Negro' boy belonging to John Gilbert of Smiths Tribe; but the boy might have been the same child called Ketah in 1694. By 1700 he might have been somewhat older, though young enough to have been described by executors as a 'boy'. This would fit with his evaluation of £26, roughly the same as that of an adult: Frank, for example,

from the same inventory, was a 'Negro' boy valued at £18;⁴⁷ and an unnamed 'Negro' man from another inventory of the same period was valued at £25.⁴⁸ With Keto, one can thus postulate the existence of two people whose origins lay broadly within the 'Gold Coast' region: in all probability unfortunate Gã victims of war and kidnapping.

Finally there is the name Psiche, which is phonetically analogous to Pisis. This was the name of a port city, identified in the 1729 map quoted above. It was situated at the extreme eastern portion of the 'Gold Coast'. The cities of Pisis, Keta and Winneba were in fact all located along the eastern 'Gold Coast'. Psiche, however, may also refer to the European name Psyche. But an African port-city derivation is worth considering, albeit as a less plausible alternative.

These theoretical derivations fit plausibly within a tradition noted by names such as Calabare/Carabare and Popelo of Somesenta. This tradition is also strongly suggested in the name of Oda, a woman recorded in eighteenth-century probate materials. The name Oda appears in the inventory of Richard Tucker of St. George's on March 11, 1735: this was with certainty the name Oda noted in the will of Nathaniel Besey of Warwick, which had been written on December 8, 1693.⁴⁹ Forty-two years separate the two references, and this dovetails well with the context of the name's second appearance: in which she was recorded as an old woman "...worn out & past her labour...", and with no valuation.⁵⁰ She would have to have been at least sixty or seventy years of age to warrant such a description, putting her in her 20s or 30s or even 40s in 1693. Oda is phonetically analogous to Oda, the name of a river in the environs of Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti Confederation.⁵¹ During her early life the Confederacy had not as yet been

formed, but the region was occupied by various associated Oyoko clans. The Oda river coursed through what was the heartland of the kingdom of Kumasi. Oda's possession of the name resembles Popelo's possession of both Popelo and Somesenta: Popelo was the name of the region in the Yucatan where the Somesenta river was located; Oda was the name of the region in which the Oda river was found. Indeed, no more than forty years separate Oda of Oda and Popelo of Somesenta. It is, thus, inductively strong that Oda received her name in much the same way.

Interestingly, there is also the name of an enslaved sailor recorded in October 1733 in the inventory of Thomas Jenour. He was a 'Negro' man named Cobry, and had been recorded as 'at sea' during the year the inventory was compiled. The name Cobry is phonetically identical to the name of the Rio Cobre in the state of Cobre ([An]kobar/[An]kobra).⁵² It is possible that this man either in the late seventeenth century or early eighteenth century was given the name of that kingdom. This region had come under Asante control by 1715, part of the Confederation's attempts to reach the European factors directly. As such it would have been an area engulfed in the Asante Wars, which most notably did result in the sale of prisoners-of-war to the Europeans.⁵³ Moreover, as the name Rio Cobre states, a river was found within the boundaries of this region, and was given its name. Again, one has the linkage of a river, a region, an area of widespread kidnapping and a name of a Bermuda slave: it seems strongly inductive that this man, like Popelo of Somesenta, Calabare and Oda, left from the area indicated by 'his' name.

Finally and significantly, there is the name Mingo listed among a group of

seven 'Negroes' with clear 'Gold Coast' weekday names. They, and Mingo, were sold by the planter Peter Bowen to Thomas Bellman in September 1706, and appear in records recording the transaction. Mingo was a 'Negro' man, and it is possible that he was associated with the city of Ningo in the east of the 'Gold Coast'. Like Keta, Wimba, Pisis and Tema, Ningo was a place from which many people were sold. The name Mingo is phonetically close to the name of this 'Gold Coast' slave-trading city. Julia Stewart identified Mingo as an African name and Herbert Gutman saw it generally as 'Non-Anglo American male name'.⁵⁴ Yet Gwendolyn Midlo Hall connected the name Mingo to the Hausas.⁵⁵ A Hausa derivation does not create problems for a 'Gold Coast' origin of Mingo, due to the presence of Hausas along the 'Gold Coast'. Moreover, Asante military campaigns in and against the savannah countries (a few of them Muslim) just north of this region would have increased the possibility of Hausa prisoners-of-war.⁵⁶ Hausas had lived in the areas which came under Asante domination in the Northeast.

Thus, one can synthesise the positions of Hall, Gutman and Stewart, and make the argument that any one Mingo may have been a Hausa; and this does not, in itself, undermine a 'Gold Coast' connection.

Mingo, as a personal name, first occurred in the Bermuda records as early as 1650, the name of the wife of the unnamed 'Negro' man.⁵⁷ She seems to be the only woman in the Bermuda records named Mingo. There was also a 'Negro' boy called Mingo, who was recorded "...now known as Jack...".⁵⁸

One last point needs to be made about place names. Charles Freeman, a nineteenth-century English visitor to the 'Gold Coast', recorded some notable naming traditions. One example concerned the title Dandaūra = Da- n- Daura or

'son' [read: national] of Daura.⁵⁹ It raises the possibility of surnames, with the second name indicating the place of origin. I.A. Akinjogbin expanded on this point: "...there is the *general* West African system whereby a town shares the same name with its inhabitants. If, for certain reasons, the inhabitants were forced to abandon the town, they carried the name with themselves and gave it to any new settlement they might have later founded." [italics added]⁶⁰ Are Cobry, Ningo, and Oda best viewed as 'x the son/daughter of Cobre/ Ningo/ Oda' respectively, carrying their homelands in their names? Did these names represent 'surnames' with first names not recorded in the inventories or sale records (again not much unlike Popelo [of] Somesenta)? It would be one added interesting element suggesting an implied cultural nationalism.

Weekday names are far less difficult to identify in the records. They were invariably personal names, names which an individual was given for the day on which he or she was born. A person born on Monday, for example, was given a version of that weekday name; and this became one of the individual's personal, identifying names. Below are listed weekday names for two 'Gold Coast' populations, as well as corresponding weekday personal names for men and women.

Table 19.-- List of 'Gold Coast' Weekday Names and Weekday Personal Names

English	Days of the Week		Male Names		Female Names		Fanti	
	Ochi	Gã	Ochi	Gã	Ochi	Gã	Male	Female
Sunday	Kwesi-da	Hogba	Kwesi	Kwashi	Eksua	Akwassia	Akwesi†	Essi
Monday	Ejua-da	Ju	Kudju	Kudjo	Ajua	Ajua	Kudwo	Adwua
Tuesday	Abena-da	Jufo	Kwabina	Kwabina	Abenaba	Abna	Akobina	Araba
Wednesday	Wuku-da	Sho	Kwaku	Kwaku	Ekua	Akua	Kweku	Eua
Thursday	Iyau-da	So	Akwau	Kwau	Aba	Aba	Ekuow	Abba
Friday	Efi-da	Soha	Kwofi	Koffi	Efia	Afia/Afia	Kofi	Effua
Saturday	Memmeda	Ho	Kwamina	Kwamin	Amba	Ama	Kwamina	Amba

Sources: Richard Austin Freeman, *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman* (London: Frank Cass, 1898, 1967), p. 287; John Mensh Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Laws* (London: Frank Cass, 1897), p. 55.

*Alternative names: Ekusua/Akwassiba (Sunday/Ochi/Female); Abenaba/Abena (Tuesday/Ochi/Female); Amba/Amenewa (Saturday/Ochi/Female); Akwesi/Kwesi (Sunday/Fanti/Male); Akobina/Kobina (Tuesday/Fanti/Male); Ekuow/Kuow/Yow (Thursday/Fanti/Male); Kwamina/Kwamin (Saturday/Fanti/Male); Essi/Akosua (Sunday/Fanti/Male); Araba/Abina (Tuesday/Fanti/Female); Abba/Ya/Yawa (Thursday/Fanti/Female).

It had been suggested earlier that the name Coffey, the name of the antagonist of Martha Stoaks and Elizabeth Corbert, was a weekday name. Better phonetically written as 'Koffi', it was a general 'Gold Coast' name for males born on Friday. There is also the name of the bondsman appearing in the inventory of Hamilton silversmith Stephen Outerbridge: the listing shows the bondsman's name as Coffe.⁶¹ A book of deeds for 1700-1707 recording the sale of seven 'Negroes' (3 men, 2 women and 2 children) by a planter Peter Bowen to Thomas Bellman in September 1706 was noted earlier. It recorded one of the children as named Coffee. It also recorded two other names of clearly suggestive of 'Gold Coast' origination: Winna and Yabo. This 'Gold Coast' identification may be strengthened if the 'Negro' man listed with the group is also recalled: his name was Mingo.⁶² The group may have been a family. Wina takes one to a previous discussion of place names suggesting Winneba: Winneba→Winne^{ba}→Winnea→Winna; or Wimba→Wim^{ba}→Winna.⁶³ Yabo is clearly identifiable to 'Gold Coast' names of persons born on Thursday: Ekuow, Kuow and Yow (male, Fanti), and Kwau (male, Gã).⁶⁴ Julia Stewart recorded Yao,

which she wrote in pronunciation as YAH-oh. She located it in the Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana.⁶⁵ Yao suggests the elided 'b' - Ya^bo→YAH-oh.

The will of Mary King, written or signed on March 28, 1735, offers another example of a 'Gold Coast' weekday name. A bondswoman is recorded in the will as named Cogoe; it is probably problematic as it is phonetically closer to male weekday names for Monday: Kúdjú (Ochi); Kúdjó (Gã).⁶⁶

There was a variation of this tradition in which an English language version of a 'Gold Coast' weekday name was used- a 'creolisation,' so to speak, of an African tradition. A 'Negro' child, owned by the President of the Governor's Council, Andrew Auchinleck, was listed in an inventory of his property in April 1743. The child was recorded with the name 'Monday' [read: Kudju].

Apart from the naming traditions noted above, there is one last type deserving separate treatment. Twentieth-century anthropologist Margaret Field had described it among the Gã communities of the eastern 'Gold Coast'. Her study, published in the 1940s, constituted two volumes purporting to detail social, political, economic and ceremonial 'Gã' institutions. What serves as an important context, and a link to the dynamic cultures of the rest of the coast, is the extent of the 'Akanification' and cultural homogenisation of much of what was, by her writing, called the 'Gold Coast Colony'.⁶⁷ Field observed a patrilineal-descent element in Gã naming traditions. Moreover, she noted how a paternal grandfather and a paternal grandfather's sisters passed on their names to their grandchildren. A granddaughter would inherit her grandfather's sister's name, and a grandson would inherit a grandfather's name. Within a three-generation family, members of the first and the last had the same name, which Field represented

diagrammatically:

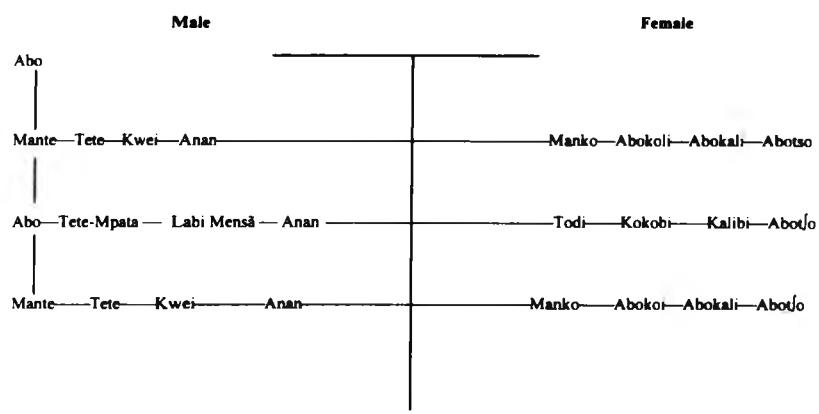


Figure 1.-- The Aboitfewe House.

Source: Margaret Field, *The Social Organisation of the Gã* (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1940), p. 1.

Abo was the name of the founder of the house (the term *we* meaning House/Clan and hence *Aboitfewe* translating 'The Abo's father's house').⁶⁸ The founder's name was not just immortalised in the naming of the Clan/House, but in its inheritance as the name of at least every other generation. It even formed a prefix in female names in the above case, again re-occurring every generation. Female naming followed the rule with the daughters of Abo (third generation) inheriting the names of their great-grandfather's daughters- their great-aunts: Manko, Abokoi, Abokoli, Abotfo. A son or daughter would inherit the name of a family member from the generation immediately proceeding and, as Field noted, the father's name was at many times prefixed to the son's, as an additional

identification.⁶⁹ This was possible for nephews as well: Tete-Mpata of the third generation inherited Mante- his father's brother's/ his uncle's name. It was the name Tete, and it was appended to Mpata. One can expect that in frequent or familiar use, one name would be dropped. It is also notable that the nephew might be named after his uncle, as was the case with the two Anan.

Women had shown similar patterns. Kalibi of the third generation has part of her name inherited by Abokali of the fourth; and Abotjo of the third generation passed her whole name, like her brother Anan, to a member of the fourth generation. Nonetheless, the passage of the father's name for additional identification must be highlighted. Field noted how two men, Mante and Kwei, had passed on their names to their eldest sons, each respectively known as Mante-Abo and Kwei-Abo [read: Kwesi/Sunday-Abo].

Herbert Gutman in his examination of North Carolinian enslaved families found some repetition of naming styles there. Males, very early in the period of slavery, were named after their fathers, similar to the pattern for males among the 'whites' in North Carolina.⁷⁰ "In the seven Benneham-Cameron families that started between 1776 and 1788," Gutman wrote, "sons had their father's names in three, and in three others a grandson had either a paternal or maternal grandfather's name."⁷¹ Girls apparently were rarely named for their mothers, differing from the prevalent 'white' tendency, and this in spite of the matrilineal descent of the slave status. This custom Gutman saw as a result of fears of family break up: "... it... is possible that children were named for fathers because fathers were more likely to be separated from their children than mothers. Naming a child for its father therefore confirmed the dyadic tie and it gave it an assured historical

continuity that complemented the close contact that bound the child to its mother."⁷² Just as naming practices served to ensure continuity after the separation caused by death, they also served to ensure it after the separation caused by the exigencies of slavery. Both were probably ideologically viewed as the same. Nonetheless, it was a common practice for nineteenth-century 'whites' to name their daughters after their mothers; so it was, notably, for nineteenth-century 'Free Blacks'.⁷³

But what was significant was that Gutman noted how the names of grandparents were passed on to the grandchildren. Again, this, like necronymic naming, recalls the point of naming as a strategy to deal with the problem of death/separation:

Of fifteen Benneham-Cameron children named for grandparents or great-grandparents, eight were first-born children and eleven either first- or second-born children. Ten of seventeen similarly named Good Hope children were the first-born, and fourteen of seventeen either the first- or second-born. Fifteen of twenty-three named for grandparents and great-grandparents were first-born in a Stirling slave family, and twenty-one either the first- or second-born. The importance of carrying a grandparent's name forward in time is seen by the fact that one or both grandparents in three-fourths of the early Benneham-Cameron (1776-1800), Good Hope (1789-1819), and Stirling (1807-1819) families had a grandchild named for him or her.⁷⁴

Gutman summarised these traditions:

Naming children for blood kin outside immediate families suggests that slaves incorporated elements of the traditional lineal orientation of their West African forebears into their new belief systems. That is hinted at by the order in which children were named for grandparents and occasionally even for great-grandparents as well as by the frequent recurrence of a parent's name in one or more families started by his or her sons and daughters...Slave social beliefs caused them to transfer quickly the names of grandparents to grandchildren.[italics added]⁷⁵

'Gold Coast' traditions thus found their resonance in American practices.

Given virtually similar sources of supply as English colonies, one might not

discount the possibility of such traditions occurring in Bermuda. The wills and inventories, especially for the period when Gutman's study began, are suggestive. There are inventories for the mid-1700s that suggest the passage of female names. For example, the document of Thomas Gilbert, compiled in 1743 (apart from noting a 'Negro' man called Mingo) listed Beck^{nm} and Beck^{nm}. Beck^{nm} as valued at £4 and located near the top of the slave listing: it plausibly indicated her advanced age. Beck^{nm} was declared as worth £28, above average for the period.⁷⁶ The two might have been a mother and a daughter or an aunt and her niece (or even a grandmother and her granddaughter). Yet, assuming the first relationship, problems would arise in applying Gutman's analysis to Bermuda. But, given what was stated about name abbreviations and Gã naming traditions, it might also suggest a continuation of an *African* system (if not in its purest form). Yet, from the standpoint of the wills, it very rarely occurred.

Notable and more justifiable examples can be found among men. When Samuel Brangman, Sr. of St. David's Island died in 1745, thirteen bondservants were listed in an inventory of his property. There were three groups of males from different generations enumerated with the same name:

Table 20.— Repetition of Personal Names among the Males Owned by Samuel Brangman, Sr.

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Adult/child</i>	<i>value</i>
<i>Group I</i>				
a.	Mingo	'Negro'	Man	N/A
b.	Mingo	'Negro'	Boy	£18
<i>Group II</i>				
a.	James ^{sen}	'Negro'	Man	£37
b.	James ('middle age')	'Negro'	Man	£40
c.	James	'Negro'	Boy	£3-10-00
<i>Group III</i>				
a.	Dick ^{sen}	'Negro'	Man	£40
b.	Dick	'Negro'	Boy	£18

Source: BW 1744-1772, v.8, p. 31.

The year 1743 occurred during the 'War of the Austrian Succession', and the elder Mingo, described as "... in the enemy's hands..." was an enslaved mariner and, more specifically, probably a privateersman.⁷⁷ Brangman probably sent, or used, his enslaved sailors for this enterprise, and through it Mingo became a casualty of war. Nonetheless, there is the significant appearance of his name, Mingo, and a possible son inheriting his father's name. Where Mingo as a name arose from was discussed above- that it was plausibly a 'Gold Coast' name. A 'Gold Coast' name-transmission tradition adds strength to the supposition, even if it runs the risk of circularity. It is also significant that three generations of men named James inherited the same name, and one after the other without pause. Given the great possibility of death and separation associated with sailing, it is notable that this tradition would locate itself among Brangman's slaves. The

thirteen bondservants of Samuel Brangman, as members of a family or families, may explain the frequency within this group of this name-transmission system.

Wills, inventories, and the context of Caribbean demography all favour the view that a population either from the 'Gold Coast', or having descendants of people who were, lived in Bermuda during the 1700s. They were, *at the very least*, large enough to shape the culture of resistance developing in the colony. Specifically, the appearance of those poisoning techniques constituting poisoning methodology in Bermuda coincided with the growing number of persons of 'Gold Coast' African descent in the Americas. It also coincided with the possible existence of that population, in meaningful numbers, in Bermuda.

II. The Culture of Resistance: African 'Gold Coast' Contributions to Bermuda's Poisoning and Revolution Conspiracies

'Hydro-mercantile' roots: the African context of Bermuda sailing

One of the notable features of both the poison plots and the revolutionary Conspiracy of 1761 is the shadowy (and not so shadowy) involvement of enslaved merchant-sailors. Some, as will be seen, had a clear African/'Gold Coastal' heritage. They were, that is, an extension of Africa into another American institution. This is not surprising: watercraft was essential to much of West African life. It is worth beginning an examination of African/'Gold Coast' contributions to resistance from this maritime African context.

Africa generally, and the West African coastal regions especially, were blessed with large navigable rivers; and it was possible to ride these rivers far into land. It stood to reason that there would be a multiplicity of river and ocean-going craft, from the large-scale Mandinka *almadias* to the *zopoli* and smaller 'Gold Coast' 'surf-riders'. The *zopoli*, for example, were noted by one historian as able to carry thirty men.⁷⁸

All of these vessels were the centrifuges of most African trading. This was particularly so in those countries which became the sources of the Americas' African captives: Senegambia and the 'Gold Coast'. Harold Lawrence quoted Felix Dubois' observation of the "... 'powerful ship owner in Sansanding [in Senegambia]' who controlled 'the greater part of the canoes trading with Timbuctoo'".⁷⁹

The grandson this ship owner, through his recollections of the years when Sansanding had been rich through trade, related to Dubois the importance of boats to it. By extension, the grandson underscored the importance of the African merchant-sailor:

'Thou hast seen our city in ruins,' said Bossisa; 'its houses deserted and falling in pieces. Thou hast beheld our most unhappy Mosque. And when thou shalt be returned into thy country of thy fathers, thou shalt say: I have seen Sansanding, and it is a city in ruins, a city of nothingness. But yet thou hast not seen our city... This beard and these white hairs alone have seen it. And at that time the city was cheerful and well built, containing many markets. The people were full of contentment, and were apparelled in the fine garments and rich clothing of Arabia which were brought by our canoes from Timbuctoo, together with many things both beautiful and pleasant.' [italics added]⁸⁰

These boats also connected 'Upper Guinea' to 'Lower Guinea', extending trading networks along the various great rivers such as the Niger/Joliba and the Gambia: from the West African savannah economies to the European forts all along the coasts.⁸¹

Although W. Jeffrey Bolster assured his readers that African-built vessels were never as large as the European-built types, and that few of the former ever journeyed out of sight of land, he did recall that 'Gold Coast' boatmen made so-called 'coasting journeys' far from their countries and cities.⁸² It is a question of dispute just how many involved themselves in journeys beyond the sight of land—either in deep sea fishing expeditions or trade; and it is even a question of dispute just how large Medieval-era African vessels became.⁸³ These issues belong to another discussion. But, it suffices only to mention the point of agreement: that 'Gold Coast' boating/trading, in particular could reach far— and that these early trading relationships were usurped by European competitors. Bolster observed:

Europeans reserved their highest accolades for Gold Coast canoemen like the ones John Barbot saw fitting out 'large canoes in which they make coasting voyages, as far as *Angola*.' Barbot believed the Mina [of Elmina] to be 'the finest and most experienced men to manage and paddle the canoes over the bars and breakings,' but he also praised canoemen from Axim and Winneba who handled gracefully 'the worst and most beating seas.' Because many Yoruba and other lagoon-fronting peoples on the 'Slave Coast'... avoided the open sea, European traders planning to land at Slave Coast towns such as Whydah, Allada, and Lagos often employed Gold Coast canoemen carrying them and their canoes aboard ship on coastal runs. Skilled canoemen were indispensable to trading on stretches of beach dominated by the implacable surf. [*italics in text*]

They would have been particularly useful (if employed in the fashion as Bolster noted) in negotiating the entry into the contiguous Keta lagoon region, and leading (or linking) European ship traders to the Keta city-state. The citing of Winneba fits well with what was earlier hypothesised of African demographic contributions to Bermuda from this city. These boatmen were also in a position to combine their mercantile activities (activities which linked the 'Gold Coast' to Benin and the Kongo/Angola kingdoms) with any tasks they performed for the Europeans.⁸⁴ It would have been a 'carrying trade' in more than one sense of the phrase.

Yet, the resemblance between servile pilot/merchant-sailor activities in the Americas (to be discussed below in the subsequent chapter) and those of boatmen in West Africa is striking enough to add support to two conclusions: that the sea activities of servile populations, especially in Bermuda, owe a large and significant portion of their culture to the West African/'Gold Coast' maritime context; and that the enslaved merchant-sailor was, *in part*, an extension of an African derivative.

Institutional roots: the African context of 'Obeah'

It is, however, with the poison plots that the African contribution is more directly implicated in pre-1764 resistance. Yet before examining the narrower technical constitution of this contribution, it is worth stepping back and examining the institutional roots. Paradoxically, it is within medical technology that this search begins.

Fanti communities often had two types of personnel strictly or ostensibly concerned with medical therapy. The most prominent was the *okomfo*, a word which combines the two roots of '*kom*' ('possession') and '*fo*' to render the translation 'possession-person'. The term reflects the essential purpose of this individual: that of acting as an intercessor between the people and the transcendent, supra-sensible, so-called 'spirit world'. More specifically, the *okomfo* operated as the intercessor between the devotees of a particular movement and their 'spiritual patron' or *obosom*; and often he or she was obliged to 'become' the *obosom* in question- the idea, of course, behind 'spirit possession'.⁸⁵ Yet the important task of *akomfo*, apart from the formation of 'charms' or 'protection amulets', was the curing of physical and bodily problems. The long five-year period of training of an *okomfo* involved "...therapeutic techniques, including instructions about the properties of various plants and herbs and their location...".⁸⁶ This medicine, as the broad technique of healing and the narrow application of plant properties, suggests a store of knowledge that transformed the intercessor into a medic. It reflected in one occupation the intimate link between natural and 'supernatural' cures. It was also a job open to both men and women: only a moment of possession determined who was suitable for candidacy; and

from that moment the candidate submitted herself or himself to a female or male *okomfo* for training.⁸⁷

But *akomfo* were not the only therapists among historic Fanti populations. They shared this role with the far more specialised *adurnsinyifo* (singular *adurnsinyi*). The etymology actually reflects the specialisation: *aduru* meaning medicine.⁸⁸ Christiansen wrote that it was generally accepted that the *adurnsinyi* held greater proficiency in the task of providing 'natural' remedies than *akomfo*: that is, in solving the problems of the sensible, empirical body.⁸⁹ *Adurnsinyifo*, in the past, were solely concerned with the mundane, 'non-supernatural' problems; problems that could be alleviated only through medicines. "Fanti elders state," wrote Christiansen, "that in former times the herbalist confined his treatment to medication in which he was reputed to be highly skilled."⁹⁰ Several years of apprenticeship and training had to pass before one could practice as an *adurnsinyi*.

Christiansen's article was, however, about how Fanti 'priests' were under pressure to satisfy changing demands. *Adurnsinyifo* were also under obligation to change. As their clients made them aware of their 'supernatural' needs, they felt the pressure to encroach upon the duties of *akomfo*. "'People ask me to call a deity' ...", one *adurnsinyi* remarked to Christiansen, "... 'and I do it to make them happy and give them value for money, but it doesn't change the medicine I give them.'"⁹¹ Already one sees the evidence of task-overlap; and significantly, in both African and American cases, they occurred during periods of European hegemony.

Christiansen did not discuss the *obayifo*, but he did mention one feature associated with this vocation. R.S. Rattray, who did mention *abayifo* among the Asante, quoted one informant's rather brutal and selectively negative description

of them. The informant, Yao Aduwua, had noted, *inter alia*, that if "... 'an old witch wishes her daughter to become a witch, she will bathe her repeatedly with 'medicine' at the suminaso (kitchen midden).'" Rattray, in fact, saw in the term '*abayifo*' the root '*bayi*' which he translated as 'witch'. Aduwua noted an activity of *abayifo* traditionally linked to Caribbean Obeah: "Witches always try to obtain some object that belonged to the person whom they wish to kill, such as hair, nail cuttings, or waist beads..."⁹² Christiansen had noted that Fanti also took care not to leave these of their most personal possessions around: "There is general agreement that a charm is more effective if it includes something from the body of the intended victim or something that has been in contact with him- nail pairings, hair, a piece of his towel or clothing, a bit of mud from the place where he urinated, or merely some dust on which he has stepped. This is why the Fanti are cautious about disposing of hair and nail parings, which are held to be particularly efficacious."⁹³

But *akomfo* could easily combine '*bayi*' with natural poisoning. For example, sceptics about *akomfo* 'charms', according to Christiansen, often accused intercessors of attributing illnesses to their charms which were really due to their "...judicious use of poison."⁹⁴ Within the task of the *okomfo*, one had not only the proficient knowledge and training in medicine, *a fortiori* in the medical properties of plants, but the 'supernatural' tasks of charm composition, and the proficiency of poisoning. It is argued here that this is precisely what was expected either of African *akomfo* or African *abayifo* in their condition as enslaved in the Americas. These operations in the British Caribbean were all given the name 'obeah'.

The first, and probably only *explicit* statement that would place Obeah, and therefore the *abayifo*, in Bermuda came from Joshua Marsden, the Methodist Missionary sent to Bermuda in the 1800s. He wrote disparagingly of it. "Some few among them," he complained, "possess a species of witchcraft called Obyism. This detestable imposture does not so much prevail in Bermuda as in some of the other West India Islands, and is always renounced the moment they become serious."⁹⁵ Marsden's views obviously reflect a sectarianism: his immediate concern was to propagate the Methodist gospel, and he conceived of Obeah as in the way of his work. Yet after dismissing Obeah as a 'detestable imposture' he found himself in the somewhat ridiculous position of demonstrating that methods used were efficacious and the effects real *according to his standards*.⁹⁶ On this topic of its potency, his list of symptoms included "...constant wasting of the body..."⁹⁷ - as opposed to immediate death. "This practice is pursued by a certain class of men called obeah men [read: literally, '*abayifo*'] or conjurors...", he continued: "These people make use of a kind of poison in the exercise of their magic art which is a species of dog's bane, *apocynura erectum* and deemed one of the most deadly poisons with which we are acquainted." It produced, among other things, a 'wasting' away.⁹⁸

Obeah practice, however, was merely hinted at in eighteenth-century documentation. The *Act for the Better Government of Negroes etc. ... Bond or Free* (1764) gave a description of something which exactly paralleled methods and techniques connected with Obeah elsewhere. It also reflected a Marsden-type scepticism of the non-psychological efficacy of these methods: "And whereas it is

a general notion among negroes, and other slaves, that Person's lives may be affected by certain compositions being laid and placed in the Houses, Beds, and other places, where white people dwell and reside; and whereas such may not actually be found to be of a poisonous nature, yet as they are laid with an intent to affect some Person, or Persons, it ought to be esteemed highly criminal in the doer or doers thereof...".⁹⁹

It, in fact, was deemed more than just highly criminal, but felonious. Yet the 1764 Act of Assembly was peculiar as it was, in essence, punishing for the "... *intent* to affect some person or persons..." without any *affect* having to take place. All basically one needed was the 'composition', and the intention was assumed.

This was a loophole-closing law and it more than likely resulted from the case against Polibus, a 'Negro' man indicted for 'poisoning' in the December 1755 Court of the Assizes. Polibus had been the slave of mariner Charles Fielding. According to an indictment, Polibus, sometime in 1752 "...did hide, put and conceal in the Ground under a Certain Stone or step in the yard adjoining and belonging to the Mansion... of Cornelius Hinson a certain Poisonous Matter or Mixture of sundry ingredients wrapt up in some Raggs As also a certain Poisonous Liquor or composition of a blue Colour in a certain Glass Phiol...".¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Wallis, in a statement to the court, declared that she saw him place this composition under the step. She gave a detailed account of the substances: "On inspection it was like blue stone water, and that the Mixture appeared like Grindstone mudd, and the pairings of Nails and hair etc. smelt of Rum."¹⁰¹

The jurors may have deemed this as 'harmless' psychological Obeah; maybe they felt that the court's time had been wasted on the matter. They

subsequently acquitted the 'Negro' bondsman. But the court, indirectly, did acknowledge a loophole in the law, which the Act of 1764 appropriately filled: if Polibius had been tried later, the mere intention to place Obeah compounds would have caused his conviction. It is of no small interest that one of those involved in the passage of the 1764 Act of Assembly was the Speaker of the House, Cornelius Hinson. Again, what is clear is that Obeah practice did find its way into Bermuda, its methods of psychological 'poisoning' aimed as much at 'white' proprietors as the enslaved: indeed, the very 1764 Act of Assembly itself confirmed this.

Technical roots of poison: African medicine in the Americas

It seems that French colonists in Louisiana when faced with slave illnesses during the 1700s, became aware of successful African medical practices. Yet they compromised with racialism when it came to language: "They [the Africans] were skilled in herbal medicine," wrote Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, "and were often better therapists than the French doctors, who were always described as surgeons."¹⁰² French colonist Le Page du Pratz, however, was not about to let a name get between health/profit and the King's stock of captives; and he reaped the rewards of this policy when, before 1734, an enslaved doctor successfully applied a cure for scurvy: "First he treated the pain. Then he made a paste from iron rust soaked in lemon juice and herbs, which he places on the patient's gums at all times except when the patient ate. Every day the patient drank two pints of tea made with lemon

juice and herbs. He recommended against dieting. The patient was to eat good food often, but in small quantities."¹⁰³

"Evidently this cure was ignored in Louisiana," Hall added, "where it would have been easy to administer: there were so many oranges growing there that the settlers allowed them to rot on the trees."

Inoculation was, however, the most notable of the eighteenth-century 'Gold Coast' medical innovations; and many 'whites' who reported on the practice were clearly confused by it and ignorant of its effectiveness. Jerome Handler and Jo Ann Jacoby quoted one writer in Barbados who watched horrified as Africans inoculated themselves with leprosy. He deeply believed that they were purposely infecting themselves: "'Great must be the laziness of the slave, and horrid, indeed, must be the tyranny under which he groans, which could force him to induce a disease, the most pitiable perhaps, which affects the human species.'"¹⁰⁴ Jacoby and Handler added, however, that slaves were "...following the West African practice of inoculation against leprosy or yaws...Inoculation of children was a traditional treatment for yaws in some West African areas. This method was also reported for Jamaica during the slave period, and probably also existed in other Caribbean areas, including Barbados."¹⁰⁵ Jamaica, as was noted above, received a large portion of its enslaved population, during most of the 1700s, from the 'Gold Coast'.

Cotton Mather provided further testimony of 'Gold Coast' inoculation practices as early as 1716, through a letter he had written to Dr. John Woodward. He was telling Woodward of the ravages of small-pox in the Boston area, and of the various methods for curing the disease. He added:

...many months before I met with any intimations of treating the small pox with the method of inoculation anywhere in Europe, I had from a servant of my own, an account of its being practiced in Africa. Inquiring of my Negro-man Onesimus, who is a pretty intelligent fellow, whether he ever had the small pox, he answered, both *yes* and *no*; and then told me that he had undergone an operation which had given him something of the small pox, and would forever preserve him from it, adding that it was often used among the Garamantse, and whoever had the courage to use it was forever free from the fear of the contagion. [italics in text]¹⁰⁶

Mather continued: "He described the operation to me, and showed me in his arm the scar which it had left upon him; and his description of it made it the same that afterwards I found related unto you by your Timonius."¹⁰⁷ Those who administered the inoculation plausibly knew about the importance of 'dosage' - of how much to introduce; and their methods of introduction exactly parallel those utilised today. Apparently, Mather suffered some abuse for his *advocacy* of this treatment. But clearly the criticism had nothing to do with whether it was a widespread medical technique in Africa: there were some willing to stake their faith in the 'Negro Paradigm', even at the expense of their lives.¹⁰⁸ But it also recalls the reaction of the 'white' writer in Barbados to the inoculation practices he had seen. Significantly, Mather provided a location for the technique - 'among the Garamantse'. Garamantse can be identified with Coromontee/Kromantin, a Fanti *oman* along the 'Gold Coast'.

A small pox infection had occurred in Bermuda in 1761. It was reported by John Conyers at William Popple's Council meeting in February of that year.¹⁰⁹ How widespread it was is not clear, but some hint is offered by the census records of 1756 to 1761. The year 1761 was first year that the population of 'Black' women dropped for the whole of the 1700s: but this may have been due to other reasons, such as the expulsions ordered by the government in response to the

Conspiracy of 1761. Yet the number of 'black' women dropped merely by five, and other 'black' groups recorded *increases*. Moreover, beyond 'black' women and beyond the increases in the number of 'white' girls, the 'white' population *as a whole* suffered decreases in its numbers:

Table 21.— Increase/Decrease of Population in Bermuda by Race/Sex. 1756-62

Year	Black Women	Black Men	Black Boys	Black Girls	White Men	White Women	White Girls	White Boys
1756	1569	1149	1151	1031	1826	2130	1098	1317
1762	1564	1287	1280	1085	1671	2046	1142	1293
increase/decrease	-5	+138	+137	+54	-155	-84	+44	-24

Source: Elaine Forman Crane "Socioeconomics of a Female Majority in Eighteenth-century Bermuda," *Signs*, 15:2 (Winter 1990), p. 237; CO 37 18, p. 128.

There was also a decrease in numbers of 'white men at sea', from 550 to 439. The loss of 155 expressed in the chart, through maritime ventures, cannot explain all of the decreases in that population. The effect of the small pox epidemic, *inter alia*, might be posited. It would, of course, be an exaggeration to attribute all or even most of these diminutions to small pox *a fortiori* to a poisoning campaign using small pox.

But the linkage between the poisoning component of the Conspiracy of 1761 and the coincidental appearance of a small pox affliction in Bermuda is worth some thought. The administration of small pox to kill was not only easily done within the clearly widespread method of inoculation; it was complained of, though not specifically, by the *Act for the Better Government of Negroes Mulattoes and Indians, Bond and Free* (1764). Beyond giving hints to a possible 'black' solution to medical problems such as small pox, it further suggested that

the line between causing afflictions and curing them was *intentionally* crossed, and the crossing of it cleverly hidden: "And whereas many Negroes, Mulattoes, Indians and Mustees, under pretence of practising Physic, have prepared and exhibited poisonous medicines, by which many Persons have been cruelly murdered, and others have languished under long and tedious indispositions and it will be difficult to detect such pernicious and dangerous practices, if they should be permitted to exhibit any sort of medicine...".¹¹⁰ Any slave found guilty would be deemed guilty of a felony and liable to execution 'without benefit of clergy'. Benefit of clergy was allowed for the felon convicted of simply providing medical assistance without "...an *ill-intent* ...[and had not] attended with any bad consequences...". [italics added]¹¹¹

It must be conceded that no specific mention of small pox administrators masquerading their attacks as cures was made. One would think, given the 'grievous' nature of the offence, from the legislators' perspective, it would have been. But the need to make the law general enough to cover a multitude of acts of this nature may less than perfectly explain this failure to mention it. Law makers, incidentally, did attempt to place one exception to slave medical administration: "...nothing herein contained shall be construed to extend to any slave, or slaves, administering medicines by his or her Master's or Mistress's order in his or her family, or the family of another, with the mutual consent of the owner of such slave and the Master or Mistress or such family."¹¹² It, of course, sought to give proprietors control over valuable pieces of 'black knowledge', like all other valued creations of servile peoples; and it made it difficult for the enslaved to secure medical assistance from other slaves either for themselves or their children

independently of the proprietor's will.

Yet, the results of poison and the masquerading of these results as 'normal' medical afflictions were clearly conceivable to contemporary observers, especially with regards to small pox. But this is one of the elements in the administration of toxins that constituted the poisoning plots. Other aspects such as the selection of appropriate substances, knowledge of substances, dosage and techniques of introduction into the body, were dealt with by Bermuda's poison plotters. A case study on practices in Saint-Domingue helps to fill out these descriptions.

Case study: Haitian Voudou

E. Wade Davis, in an article for *Caribbean Review*, began by noting that for many years some anthropologists had long appreciated the material basis behind mythical tales of 'zombie existence'. As early as 1938, the protégé of Melville Herskovits, the anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston, had popularised in narrow circles a re-understanding in North America of folkloric representations of 'zombification'. She argued in *Tell My Horse* that the zombie condition "... is not a case of awakening from the dead, but a matter of the semblance of death induced by some drug known to a few: some secret probably brought from Africa and handed down generation to generation."¹³

The 'zombie priest' was thus not some grisly puppeteer, but something less fantastic. Davis quoted Harold Courlander's isolation of two parts of the process.

The first entailed the reduction by toxins of a perfectly healthy individual to the state of 'near and apparent death'; and the second, the administration of chemicals to the inert body which on one hand were antidotes to the toxins, and on the other enfeeblers of the mind, robbing the individual of certain mental functioning. Persons seeing the previously dead and buried, stumbling along the street and cast in a haze of mind-destroying chemicals, would have had the sensation of being in the presence of the living dead: "...the victim is not really dead", assured Courlander, " 'but had succumbed to virulent poison which numbs all the senses and stops bodily function but does not kill. Upon disinterment, the victim is given an antidote which restores most physical processes but leaves the mind in an inert state without will or the power to resist.'"¹⁴ Davis agreed with these propositions and, more relevantly, recorded a number of methods used by different groups of specialists to render the same result.

The first concerns raw materials. Davis isolated five common animal ingredients and sources: "...burnt and ground human remains, a small tree frog, a polychaete worm, a large New World toad (*Bufo marinus* L.) and one or more species in two genera of puffer fish."¹⁵ His study focused on two, the toad and the puffer fish. A battery of chemicals are found in the skin and parotid glands of both African and South American varieties of toad; and both Africans and Brazilian Caribs used chemicals within the toad's skin for poison-arrow preparations. The notable toxins act as muscle relaxants, inducing paralysis. They also hamper respiration, probably an extension of their muscle-relaxant role: they would have given the impression that the victim was experiencing difficulty in breathing. But *bufo marinus* also contained hallucinogenic compounds, which found their way

into *hougan* preparations of *concombre zombi* or zombie cucumber.

Preparation, administration and dosage required more than basic knowledge. *Hougans* were obliged to understand which chemicals had to be applied to the skin, through puncture, inhaled or ingested to produce the *desired* affect.¹¹⁶ Precision in dosage took on metaphysical proportions. The philosophical training of the *hougan* (as intercessor between the living and the dead) informed his role as a toxicologist. It determined what type of 'existence' was to be created for the victim through poisoning: whether he or she suffered 'total death', or was 'killed' only to be brought back to life.¹¹⁷ "Haitian *bocors*," wrote Davis, "recognise the potency of their preparations, and acknowledge, at least implicitly, the importance of proper applications and correct dosage. Although they believe that the creation of a zombie is a magical act, and that the poison always kills, they note that certain combinations of poison are too 'explosive', or that they 'kill too completely'. Each poison must be carefully 'weighed'...". He added, most relevantly:

One *hougan* said he had three zombie poisons all of which included the sea-toad; one poison killed immediately, another caused the victim to waste away slowly, whereas the third caused the victim's skin to peel away before death.¹¹⁸

There was nothing 'folk' or mundane about any aspect of these techniques: they implied technical and philosophical training, the type of education existing exclusively within the medico-religious elite of the community. It seems reasonable that this education would have been transmitted into the culture of Bermudian poisoning, even grafted onto *obayifo* techniques. This will become more supportable once one of the poisoning plots itself is examined.

Epilogue

Coffey's conflict with Martha Stokes over the watermelons appeared to have been forgotten, and the bondsman probably did not feel the need to be concerned about its implications. Yet the whole matter resurfaced suddenly, leading to the arrest of the man at the house of his Hamilton owner Mrs. Trott. Coffey, however, was not prepared to offer himself up willingly. When the constable for Hamilton Tribe, Jeremiah Burrows, attempted to seize him, Coffey allegedly charged at an assisting officer with a knife, though failing to land the weapon. He was nonetheless apprehended, and made to appear before the Court of the Justices of the Peace in the summer of 1721.

The case, however, was postponed until the fall session of the court, October 5, 1721. At this session, the justices questioned the women closely on certain particulars of the encounter they had with Coffey, asking them what they felt the words 'You don't know what I mean, but I know what I mean' meant to them. The women replied that the assertion at first 'greatly surprised' them, but "...they thought no more of it untill they hear'd it was thought the negros were to Rise." The justices mused on this, and then ordered Jeremiah Burges to tie the 'negro man' to a post located at the door of the court, and to give him "...fifty Lashes on his naked Back, well laid on, with a Sufficient whip...". This was "...accordingly done". It was not stated directly what the lashing was for, but it is not implausible that it served to put sufficient fear into those contemplating the 'revolution' intimated by Coffey.¹¹⁹

No revolution emerged, regardless of the dramatic punishment of Coffey; but shadows of this event were to be cast into a revolutionary conspiracy developing over a generation later. Moreover, the frustrations born in the relations between proprietors and bondservants, in part articulated by Coffey, were to take on a different form within this era of declining economy and declining socio-political relations. The African contribution to this in the techniques of poison constituted one Bermuda-based aspect of a local 'Akan Rebelliousness Paradigm': a rebelliousness that was itself the fruit of Africa's historical changes.

Endnotes: Chapter III

¹ *Courts of the Justice of the Peace*, pp. 883-5.

² See above "Introduction: Race and Slavery: the Birth of a Social and Political Order in Bermuda, 1616-1669", passim.

³ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, pp. 230-239.

⁴ *A Calendar of Early Bermuda Records*, pp. 511-531.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 499.

⁶ Johannes Menne Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 107.

⁷ I.A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and its Neighbours 1708-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 26, and passim. Samuel Johnson, in his *History of the Yoruba*, observed that in Yoruba languages the "...harsh r is generally softened into l so that instead of tikara we say tikala...". This 'softening' occurred in the 'Gold Coast' as well, for it would account for why some Europeans heard Coromantees as 'Callamantees' (see Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels*, p. 89); Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, edited by O. Johnson (Lagos: C.S.S. Bookshops, 1921, 1976), p. xlii.

⁸ *A Calendar of Early Bermuda Records*, p. 499; C.O. 37 25 (miscell.) 1689, p. 91.

⁹ See Table 19, "List of Weekday Names and Weekday Personal Names" below, p. 140.

¹⁰ CO 37 25 (miscell.) 1689, p. 91.

¹¹ *A Calendar of Early Bermuda Records*, p. 499.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 499. The renting of them together might be very weakly suggestive of an attempt to provide some familial supervision for the boy Macaco.

¹³ The map was reproduced in J.A. Rogers, *Africa's Gift to America: the Afro-American in the making and saving of the United States* (St. Petersburg, Florida: Helga M. Rogers, 1961), p. 16. Rogers seemed to imply that it was produced in 1650, although its origin and date have not been otherwise confidently determined. A date of its creation as c. 1650, and the appearance of Macaco in the bills of sale of Bermuda c. 1660, would fit well.

¹⁴ Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 112.

¹⁵ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, pp. 54-5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁷ Susan Westbury, "Slaves of Colonial Virginia: where they came from", *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. XLII (April 1985), pp. 232-7.

¹⁸ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 55.

¹⁹ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *Book of Deeds*, 1700-1707, pt. 3, no. 4, pp. 22-5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-5.

²¹ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 54.

²² *Book of Deeds*, 1700-07, pp. 22-5.

²³ Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: a census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 157.

²⁴ Carl Christian Reindorf, *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante: based on traditions and historical facts comprising a period of more than three centuries from about 1500-1860* (Basel, Switzerland: Basel Mission Book Depot, 1889), p. 322; see also, Ansu Datta and R. Porter, "The Asafo System in Historical Perspective: an inquiry into the origin and development of a Ghanaian Institution", *Journal of African History*, xii:2 (1971), p. 293.

²⁵ Jonathan Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 161.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

²⁸ Margaret Field, *The Social Organisation of the Gã* (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1940), pp. 71-2; Walter Rodney, "The Gold Coast", *Cambridge History of Africa, c.1699-c.1700*, edited by Richard Gray, v. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 318-9.

²⁹ W.A. Richards, "The Import of Guns into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century", *Journal of African History*, 21:1 (1990), p. 46.

³⁰ Rodney, "The Gold Coast", p. 320.

³¹ Richards, "The Import of Guns into West Africa", p. 43.

³² Ivor Wilks, "The Rise of the Akwamu Empire 1650-1710", *Transactions of the Historical*

Society of Ghana 3:2 (1957), p. 105.

³³ Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and the Guianas*, p. 190.

³⁴ Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 154-5.

³⁵ Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: the Saint Domingue Revolution from below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1990), pp. 26-7.

³⁶ John K. Thornton, "African Soldiers in the Haitian Revolution", *Journal of Caribbean History*, 26:1 (1992), p. 59.

³⁷ "Bermudians in St. Eustatius" *Bermuda Historical Quarterly*, 7:4 (Winter 1950), passim; *Masters, Passengers, Sailors from Bermuda*, passim.

³⁸ Westbury, "Slaves of Colonial Virginia", passim.

³⁹ BW 1695-1700, v.2, pt. 1, p.23.

⁴⁰ Wilks, "The Rise of the Akwamu Empire", p. 114.

⁴¹ K. Yeboa Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720: a study of the African reaction to European trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 200.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁴³ Rodney, "The Gold Coast", p. 319.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁴⁵ Wilks, "The Rise of the Akwamu Empire", p. 113; from Jean Barbot, "A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea, in Churchill's *Collections of Voyages and Travels*, vol. V (1732), p. 136.

⁴⁶ BW 1695-1700, v. 2, pt. 1, p. 129.

⁴⁷ (Feb. 21, 1700); *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁴⁸ (Jan. 7, 1696); *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁴⁹ BW 1693-1703, v.2, pt. 2, p. 165.

⁵⁰ BW 1734-1744, v. 7, p. 74.

⁵¹ Reindorf, *History of the Gold Coast* (see front book cover). It was also the name of a town south-west of the Pra River which was attacked by Asante in 1702. See map in K. Yeboa Daaku, *Osei Tutu of Asante* (London: Heinemann, 1976), p. 44.

⁵² Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast*, p. 200.

⁵³ Rodney, "The Gold Coast", p. 312; Daaku, *Osei Tutu*, p. 44.

⁵⁴ Julia Stewart, *1001 African Names: first and last names from the African continent* (New York: Citadel Press, 1996), p. 28; Herbert Gutman, *The Black family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), p. 242.

⁵⁵ Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: the development of Afro-Creole culture in the eighteenth century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), p. 297.

⁵⁶ Rodney, "The Gold Coast", pp. 313-4. Not all would have been prisoners-of-war. The Asante Confederacy had reduced a few of these northern countries, notably Dagomba and Gonja, to a system of indirect rule. A commissioner was appointed from Kumasi to liaise with and supervise subordinated rulers. One of the tasks of this commissioner was to ensure that the annual tax was paid to Asante by the conquered state within its jurisdiction. This tax, deeply resented by the inhabitants of these countries, was made up in part through the provision of fellow countrymen for enslavement. Individuals reduced to slavery would subsequently have been sold to the Europeans by Asante representatives and agents on the coast. It underscored the reasons for the deep passion inspired against the Asante. Yet it was through this that a means was made available to the government in Kumasi to purchase the weaponry desperately needed by its military. See Nehemiah Levtzion, "North-west Africa: from the Maghrib to the fringes of the forest," *Cambridge History of Africa, c.1699-c.1700*, edited by Richard Gray, v. IV (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 189. It seems plausible that some Hausas living in countries vanquished by the Asante found themselves enslaved and sold to the Europeans through this scheme.

⁵⁷ BW 1648-1685 v. 1, p. 11.

⁵⁸ *A Calendar of Early Bermuda Deeds*, p. 566; Feb. 10, 1670. He was sold by Henry Brayne, commanding officer of the *Carolina*, to St. Georgian merchant James Browne. There is some suggestion that Mingo's arrival in Bermuda was through some military action in 'Port Royal'. A note appended to the sale records reads: "Capt. Joseph West involved in expedition on to Port Royal...". The transcription, with an expression of doubt, associated Port Royal with the Carolinas in North America.

⁵⁹ Daura was one of the five Hausa city-states, constituted mostly by Muslim merchants and blacksmiths. Its appearance here is thus significant given what has been written above. See Toyin

Falola and Akanmn Adebayo, "Pre-colonial Nigeria: north of the Niger-Benue", *Nigerian History and Culture*, edited by Richard Olaniyan (Essex: Longman, 1985), p. 71; Richard Freeman *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman* (London: Frank Cass, 1898, 1967), p. 283.

⁶⁰ Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and its Neighbours*, p. 213.

⁶¹ BW 1744-1772, v. 8, p. 93.

⁶² *Book of Deeds*, 1700-7, n. 4, p. 286.

⁶³ Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast*, p. 200; also, see above.

⁶⁴ Freeman, *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman*, p. 283; John Mensa Sarbah *Fanti Customary Laws: a brief introduction to the principles of native laws and customs of the Fanti and Akan districts of the Gold Coast, with a report of some cases thereon decided in the law courts* (London: Frank Cass, 1897), p. 55; Ernest Asamoah-Yaw, *Kente Cloth: an introduction to history* (New York: Ghanam Textiles, 1992), p. 96.

⁶⁵ Stewart, *1001 African Names*, p. 145.

⁶⁶ BW 1744-1772, v. 8, p. 78.

⁶⁷ Rodney, "The Gold Coast", pp. 301-2.

⁶⁸ Field, *The Social Organisation of the Gã*, p. 1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, p. 139.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 190-1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁷⁶ BW 1734-1744, v. 7, p. 160.

⁷⁷ BW 1744-72, v. 8, p. 31.

⁷⁸ Regarding the *almadias*, Harold Lawrence quoted Mahmūd Kati, who had written of the fleet of ships employed by both the leadership and citizenry of sixteenth-century Songhai. Wrote Kati: "Four hundred *kantas* would suffice to transport the entire house of Askia, his baggage, his wives, his articles of exchange and his riches in three days. Besides these *kantas*, there are from Goima to Gadia, in regard to large *almadias*, a thousand boats belonging to Askia, without counting the *almadias* of the businessmen, those of Askia's daughters, and those of the inhabitants of the city. Finally the little *almadias*, which are found in the same strait reach, I believe, the figure of six or seven hundred." Harold Lawrence, "Mandinga Voyages Across the Atlantic", *African Presence in Early America*, edited by Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 1992), p. 174; Mahmūd Kati, *Tarikh el-Fettach*, traduit par O. Houdas et M. Delafosse (Paris: Librairie d'Amerique et d'Orient, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1964), pp. 269-70. Regarding the other *zopoli*, see Ivan Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus: the African Presence in Ancient America* (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 63, and W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American seamen in the age of sail* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 47. Bolster quoted Alvise Da Mosto as writing in 1455 that the *zopoli* the Portuguese traveller saw along the Rio Grande River, Senegambia, were "...in truth... of a great size; one was almost as long as one of our vessels, but not so high; and in it were thirty Negroes."

⁷⁹ Lawrence, "Mandinga Voyages across the Atlantic", p. 174.

⁸⁰ Felix Dubois, *Timbuctoo the Mysterious*, translated by Diana White (London: William Heinemann, 1897), p. 76.

⁸¹ Bolster, *Black Jacks*, p. 47. Bolster quoted John Thornton: "Not only did the Niger-Senegal-Gambia [river] complex unite a considerable portion of West Africa... but the Niger provided a corridor that ultimately added the Hausa kingdoms, the Yoruba states, and the Nupe, Igala, and Benin kingdoms to a hydrographic system that was ultimately connected to the Atlantic."

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 50.

⁸³ See Lawrence, "Mandinga Voyages across the Atlantic", passim; Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus*, passim.

⁸⁴ Bolster, *Black Jacks*, p. 55: "The number of canoemen employed by Europeans on the Gold Coast alone rose from about 350 in 1650 to 800 or 1000 each year by 1790. Canoemen loaded and unloaded the European store ships that arrived off the Gold Coast during the dry season, from September to March. They ferried ashore building materials such as bricks and lime; staples for the garrisons including tobacco and brandy; and trade goods-textiles, metal ware, tools, weapons, and miscellaneous items such as beads, mirrors, and hats. Canoemen also conducted extensive year-

round coastal trade, serving Europeans who needed trade goods moved from their central forts or castles to outposts. They likewise served African middlemen such as Captain Quacounoe Abracon of Little Komenda, and acted as couriers and mailmen." Bolster also noted how boatmen were invariably sucked into the slave trade as victims, and transported to the Americas. This was the condition of their stormy relationship with the Europeans, and some of the European agents often behaved abusively to the boatmen with whom they interacted. One agent of the Royal African Company was recorded to have declared in 1739: "In the last few months the canoemen have been very obnoxious and have refused to do their common duty... I told them if they still refuse we can do without them and take them as slaves." Some of the boatmen had apparently run away and set fire to stores, in what can be safely characterised as a labour dispute. See .ibid., pp. 54-5.

⁸⁵ James Boyd Christiansen, "The Adaptive Functions of Fanti Priesthood", *Continuity and Change in African Cultures*, edited by William R. Bascom and Melville J. Herskovits (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 258.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 257.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 257.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 258.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 259.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 259.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 259.

⁹² Robert S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 29.

⁹³ Christiansen, "Fanti Priesthood", p. 265.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 263.

⁹⁵ Marsden, *A Narrative of a Mission*, pp. 142-3.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 142-3.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 143.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 143.

⁹⁹ Bermuda Archives, *Private Acts 1704-94*, pp. 84-5.

¹⁰⁰ AZ 102-9, 1755-64, pp. 13-7.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 13-7.

¹⁰² Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, p. 128.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁰⁴ Jerome S. Handler and Jo Ann Jacoby, "Slave Medicine and Plant Use in Barbados," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, vol. 41 (1993), p. 81.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 81, 86.

¹⁰⁶ *Selected Letters of Cotton Mather*, compiled with commentary by Kenneth Silverman (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), p. 214.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 214.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁰⁹ EXCO 1746-65, p. 309.

¹¹⁰ *Acts of the Assembly, 1704-94*, p. 85.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 85.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 85.

¹¹³ E. Wade Davis, "The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie: on the pharmacology of black magic", *Caribbean Review*, XII:3 (Summer 1983), p. 18.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 19.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

¹¹⁹ *Courts of the Justice of the Peace*, pp. 883-5.

Chapter IV

Forces and Contradictions: Enslaved Merchant-Sailors

The models of slave provisioning

Historians examining slave provisioning systems reduced them to two basic types. The first was proprietor-centred. The slave-holder provided food, clothing, shelter and other resources to his or her slaves: the slave's control and access to provisions were determined more or less by the proprietor. Barbados, Beckles argued, belonged to this type: "...Barbadian slaves had no provisioning grounds... [and] were fed from the master's stocks, which were both imported and locally produced. ...Slaves possessed only little house spots, generally no more than 25 yards square, on which to root their independent production and marketing activity."¹ Beckles saw in this the source of the 'vibrancy' of Barbadian huckstering.

Yet, whatever the inadequacy of their gardens, that the government allowed Barbadian bondservants to use them as if they were independent provisioning grounds is notable. As one early eighteenth-century observer, quoted by Beckles, wrote: "... 'those who are industrious have little additions of their own either from vegetable groups on the spot of ground allotted to them, or purchased with money obtained for the pig, the goat, or other stock raised about their huts in the negro yard.'"² These were productive bases for independent surplus-making, providing goods for barter and sale. Barbados' bondservants still

had *some* legal room to engage in independent provisioning. It is not surprising, therefore, that Beckles could characterise these self-provisioning Barbadians as 'proto-peasants'.

The second type was slave-centred: self-provisioning lands were allowed, if not legally mandated and sequestered off, for the use of bondservants. But the difference between the two may be one of degree; for in this type of provisioning, as in the proprietor-centred policy, land of some type was made available to slaves for independent use. Yet, far more than twenty-five yards were allocated to, or claimed by, bondservants. "In Jamaica," noted Hilary Beckles, "owners allotted their slaves large tracts of land unsuited for cane production in the foothill of the mountain ranges and they encouraged slaves to produce their own food. These provision grounds or polinks represented the primary form of food cultivation, and slaves were given managerial authority in this activity. In addition to the provision grounds, which were generally located miles from their homes, Jamaican slaves also cultivated little 'house spots'."³

Economic necessity due to the blockades or embargoes (particularly during the North American Revolutionary Wars) meant that proprietors would leave it to bondservants to provide for their own needs. Thus, enslaved men and women were engaged in farming and cattle husbandry for themselves, working in 'polinks' without much interference and harassment. This was as close as an American slave society could come to independent centres of enslaved production; and as with Barbados, these and other products of the land fuelled a network of bondservant huckstering that had international commercial implications.

Woodville Marshall's analysis of slave-centred provisioning described the practices of four Windward Islands. Planters anticipated political as well as economic benefits for themselves in the allotment to slaves of grounds for independent production:

... it had been 'universally considered the greatest benefit to a planter that his Negroes should have a sufficient quantity of provisions, and the more money the Negroes got for themselves, the more attached they were to the property.'⁴

While Marshall distinguished the 'gardens' from 'provisioning grounds', he noted how a 1788 law, in cases where provisioning grounds could not be granted, 'directed' planters "...to allot each adult slave at least one-fortieth of an 'acre contiguous to the Negro Houses for the purpose of cultivating gardens for their sole use and benefit.'"⁵ One discovers, thus, behind a *de jure* class of slaves, a *de facto* class of peasants: "...those who labour on land and possess their means of production: tools and the land itself."⁶

The importance of enslaved merchant-sailors as revolutionary contradictions is interwoven with this question of provisioning; it is necessary, therefore, to determine which system characterised Bermudian traditions of provisioning. It is to outlining local slave-provisioning customs that the discussion now turns.

Racial slavery and slave-provisioning customs in Bermuda during the 1700s

The Act formed in the late 1600s that outlawed independent provisioning by bondservants was *An Act to Prevent Buying and Selling or Bargaining with Slaves* (1690). Confirmed in August 1704, it extended codes against servile

huckstering which had been passed since 1623, such as the *Act to Restrayne the Insolencies of the Negroes*, the Forster Executive Order, which had expelled free 'Negroes', and the Act of Assembly of 1662/3.⁷ The 1690 Act of Assembly would not be repealed until the passage of Abolition Acts I and II in 1834,⁸ and it left open the possibility of one's trading for someone else (for example, one's proprietor). There was thus opportunity for ambiguity over what was for the proprietor's account and what was for the slave's to be exploited by bondservants.⁹

Another clause forbade 'Free Persons' from engaging in trade with 'Negroes or other slave or slaves', and was a virtual recapitulation of the 1662 Act, with even the punishments remaining the same:

...if any Free Person or Persons whatsoever shall at any time hereafter Deal or Traffick with Negroes, or other Slave or Slaves whatsoever, and be thereof Convicted by his, her, or their own Confession or by Testimony of One or more Witness or Witnesses, before any Justice of Peace on Oath, That then such Person or Persons So Offending, shall, for every such Offence forfeit and pay for every Shilling's Value of Goods or Commodities Bought, Sold, or Bartered, the Sum of Ten Shillings Curent Money, and of in Proportion for a greater or smaller Value, the said forfeiture or Penalty to be to Their Majesties, Their Heirs and Successors, for Publick Use and in case of Refusal or Payment, the Constable or Constables of such tribe or Parish, wherein such Free Person or Persons shall dwell or reside, shall and may by Warrant of the Justice of the same tribe or Parish, under his Hand and Seal, Levy the same by Distress and Sale of the Offenders Goods and Chattles, rendring the Overplus; and for want of such Distress to be taken, the same Free Person or Persons Offending to be severely Whipt in Publick by the Constable at the Discretion of the aforeSaid Justice.¹⁰

Significantly, the 1623 *Act to Restrayne* did not have stipulations which explicitly forbade 'Negroes' from *farming* for themselves. Forty years later, the 1662/3 Act of Assembly expressed the complaint "...from the Inhabitants against such masters as giue lisencc to their negroes molattoes or mustees To plant Tobacco & Trade or barter awaie the same...".¹¹ But it penalised merely the sale

of "...any Tobacco goods or merchandise..." by 'Negroes', 'mulattos', and 'mustees'.¹² Clearly, both in 1623 and in 1662/3, many proprietors appreciated the benefits of self-provisioning bondservants, provided that their self-provisioning did not extend to commerce. Nonetheless, there was an absolute prohibition against any 'Negroes or other slaves' buying, selling or bartering and otherwise engaging in any commercial transaction involving any goods or commodities for "...his or their proper Account..." or profit.

The *Act to Prevent Buying and Selling or Bargaining* (1690) would, however, specifically codify the prohibition on independent servile farming: "...That no Master or Owner of any Negro or Negroes, of other Slave or Slaves, shall at any time hereafter give him, her or them any Liberty or Allowance to Plant, Sow, Set any Tobacco, Corn, Potatoes, or other Provisions for the proper Use, Benefit, or Profit of the said Negroes or Slaves..."¹³ A situation completely opposite to what Marshall had described in Grenada had emerged.

But the law in Bermuda did not prevent proprietors allocating all farming and agricultural labour to their slaves. This was particularly useful to 'white' proprietors who were beginning to view praedial labour with contempt, as work worthy only of 'Negroes and other slaves'. Indeed, the Grand Jury presentments to the Court of Assizes in 1730 anticipated the complaints of Governor James George Bruere, and accused planters of "...supine Indolence [and] ...Incorrigible Idleness...": that they were making no effort to till their own grounds themselves.¹⁴ The implication was that bondservants were taking advantage of this to plant (and trade) for their own profit.

Still, proprietors continued to make farming the chore of their slaves: "I was several years the slave of Mr. D-", recalled Mary Prince. "Here I worked in the grounds. My work was planting and hoeing sweet potatoes, Indian corn, plantains, bananas, cabbages, pumpkins, onions, &c.. I did all the household work and attended upon a horse and cow besides, -going also upon all errands. I had to curry the horse- to clean and feed him- and sometimes to ride him a little."¹⁵

Significantly, her relationship with the land in Bermuda is clear: there was not the use of possessive pronouns in the description of that association, and certainly no indication of 'garden plots' or allocated provisioning grounds. This stands in dramatic contrast to her experiences in Antigua:

The way in which I made money was this.- When my master and mistress went from home, as they sometimes did, and left me to take care of the house and premises, I had a good deal of time to myself and made the most of it. I took in washing, and sold coffee and yams and other provisions to the captains of ships. I did not sit idling during the absence of my owners; for I wanted, by all honest means, to earn money to buy my freedom. Sometimes I bought a hog cheap on board ship, and sold it for double the money on shore; I also earned a good deal by selling coffee. By this means I by degrees acquired a little cash.¹⁶

It is perhaps of significance that the only act of trading described in the narrative involving 'Blacks' in Bermuda was one on behalf of a proprietor: when Mary Prince's mother was ordered to take her own children to be auctioned off in the city of Hamilton.¹⁷

Thus, within this context, patterns of slave provisioning emerge which reveal an extreme of the proprietor-centred type; and this type of slave-provisioning went in tandem with the system of expropriation of bondservant wages. Advertisements in the *Bermuda Gazette* invariably made the plea for

sailors, washerwomen, or domestics; and proprietors duly sent out their bondservants in anxious anticipation of the high salaries garnered from artisan work. Moreover, as Lt.-Governor Henry Hamilton outlined (in the late 1700s), more organised proprietors would set targets for their slaves and, as was stated, were not too particular as to how these targets were met. "Several of the whites", wrote Hamilton to the Bishop of London, "come to a sort of composition with them nearly in the following terms. 'I expect from each of you- Pistareens, Bitts for Bits...[each] week day...'".¹⁸ Thus, proprietors' home economies were often dependent on the wages of their bondservants; and more important, the proprietor was *under the law* able to control how much the slave earned and owned. Again, this was in contrast to practices in such islands as Jamaica, Grenada, and even Barbados.

It followed, then, that the amount of 'surplus' the enslaved artisan enjoyed depended on the power relationship between the bondservant and the proprietor. It was analogous to relations of production in medieval Europe, between landlords and the peasantry, when primitive forms of 'feudal rent' were determined by politics and not by economics alone. What this meant in Bermuda was, as one would expect, great importance placed in servile strategies of resistance: pacification of the proprietor, secret hoarding and revolution, among others. The stronger this resistance became, the less could be expropriated, *de facto*, by proprietors; and as in the relations between Medieval peasants and feudal lords, socio-political instability was inevitable. The threat to both politico-economic regimes, thus, came from below: from the resentments of peasants/serfs (in Europe), and of bondservants (in Bermuda).¹⁹

Refusal to surrender what a proprietor felt was due to him or her was considered 'embezzlement'. The example of the enslaved-tailor Prince can be noted. He had purposely failed to render an account of his wages to his proprietor John Lewis over a period of several weeks. Prince, described as 'a tall black man', was employed by a free tailor who had been paying him a salary, a salary Prince was required to turn over to his owner. But Prince absconded, and Lewis angrily declared that he had done so as a result of this 'embezzlement'. The proprietor, in an attempt to get hold of the 'lost' wages, promptly placed an advertisement in the *Bermuda Gazette* on March 19, 1800. It begged that Prince not be employed or concealed, and that masters of vessels not allow him to escape by carrying him away from the islands. Otherwise, Lewis threatened, "the subscriber will take such measures in that respect as the law will warrant him..."²⁰

Yet, the surplus payment from wages, and those resources granted to slaves that went beyond the targets set by proprietors, constituted the 'property' of the slave: an albeit *legally unprotected* surplus proprietors allowed bondservants for their maintenance. Bondservants could use it to generate hidden private surpluses for private purposes, which was much less risky than what Prince had done. Another Prince, Mary Prince, in the 1800s, offered a coded example. After her return to Bermuda from Turks Island, still the property of 'Mr. D-', she was sent by him to work for wages at a house (or houses) in the 'Cedar Hill' area of Warwick: "...every Saturday night," she recalled, "I paid the money to my master."

I had plenty of work to do there- plenty of washing; but *yet I made myself pretty comfortable*. I earned two dollars and a quarter a week, which was twenty pence a day. ²¹[italics added]

There is the suggestion that her proprietor either did not know or did not care to know how much she was clearly using for her personal benefit beyond his targets; it would have been clear to those bondservants living in the colony just how she was able to make herself 'pretty comfortable'.

There is, thus, the strong suggestion of a 'crypto-peasantry'. Moreover, an idea emerges from what she did not *explicitly* mention: that Bermudian bondservants were conceiving these 'surpluses' as their private property. The range of statements recorded in the connection with the Conspiracy of 1761 underscored and supported the contention.²²

As stated, surpluses were legally unprotected from government or proprietor expropriation. When Bess, the 'Negro' wife of an enslaved sailor, was accused of having 'stolen' the shirts of Captain Anthony Atwood, *all* of the goods discovered in the room she inhabited came under threat. Bess, the slave of Pembroke mariner Samuel Wood, was subjected to the humiliation of arrest and public trial; and her privacy was undermined as the list of goods confiscated and inventoried was publicly blared out in the Court of Assizes.

Though those investigating satisfied themselves that none of Captain Atwood's missing shirts were located in her room, they still decided to convince themselves that the *other* items in the room were stolen. Bess was declared innocent of the charge by the court, the attorney representing her having to ask one of the men who searched the room "...if the said Negro Bess has not a Husband who followed the Sea and was usually allowed privilege and Adventures

[perquisites] as being an extraordinary Sailor..."- to which he had answered 'yes'. The attorney proceeded to have his witness reveal that none of the aggrieved party's shirts were found in the room upon search.

What was notable was the statement offered by another witness regarding why Bess had sought to hide some of the items when the investigators arrived:

John Gantlet was then called and Sworn who disposed That he was called on and Summoned in the Night to go to the Grounds mentioned in the Indictment and [the items] produced in Court... [were] taken out of a Bed tick in Negro Bess's Room. And she said the Reason why they were put in the Bed Tick was that she heard that all fine cloths which belonged to Negroes were to be taken from them by the Justice, and the said Negro Bess said her Husband brought her those things or some of them.²³

She clearly expressed her concern that the courts would confiscate her goods. It was not a paranoid fear: for beyond the fact that Anthony Atwood allowed himself to endanger Bess' life by accusing her of shirt-stealing, legislation had existed which specifically outlawed slave ownership of 'fineries'. During the years leading up to a redevelopment of the *Act for the Further and Better Regulating Negroes and Other Slaves...* (1730), a grand jury, led by Captain Lewis Middleton (the hero of the early eighteenth-century Bermudian raid against Cuba) complained that in spite of laws against "...Negroes wearing fine clothes...", the practice continued and the laws were ignored: "... most people... allowing their slaves to work for themselves, which Example Occasions others (not having the same Liberty) to pilfer & Steal to go as fine as the rest does...".²⁴ Servile self-provisioning, beyond incitement to 'pilfering' threatened to place subordinates beyond their social station, with no small implications for the socio-political order. This point will be explored below, but it is clearly hinted at in another presentment of 1730: "Its no wonder to us," declared Jacob Johnson's Grand Jury to the Court

of Assizes, "...that the Negros in General in the Country are daily complained of for their nightly Incursions and depredations, since it is known by them that the civil watch is seldom or Ever Regularly kept tho' continually presented [in the Grand Jury presentments to the courts]...".

"But," it continued, "how the generality of these Negros can be on Sundays and holy days so Gaily drest, and are thus finely Arrayed from one end of the Country to the other without the Least Notice taken of them (altho' Contrary to Law) is a Mistery to us: more especially those whose masters & Mistresses are hardly able to Cover themselves with much Coarser Stuff."²⁵ Of course, it never did occur to these men to grant 'Negroes and other slaves' the right to farm and trade for themselves under law; and stealing, of course, was the traditional accusation levelled at slaves who successfully and secretly provided for themselves.

Nonetheless, positive evidence of the poverty of many slaves might suggest that the jurors were exaggerating the widespread high quality of servile dress. One suspects that, like all populations, Bermuda's servile socio-economy was pyramidal: with enslaved sailors and privateersmen clearly at the top it, and those slaves not given the liberty of provisioning somewhere at the bottom. Sailors and privateering slaves will be discussed below; but for now it is worth noting that Bess' husband was granted perquisites from sailing ventures: "...*allowed privilege* ... as being an extraordinary Sailor..."²⁶

The maritime revolution and the extension of the 'slave's economy' in the 1700s

The end of the 'War of the Spanish Succession' may have meant an economic boom for London merchants, anticipating the success of the South Sea Company and the English *asiento* trade, but it did not mean the same for British sailors. Entering after the war, which like all of the eighteenth-century European wars had seen a rise in mariner wages, British sailors experienced a decline not just in wages but in working conditions. During the war, the military, the navy and privateering vessels seduced or dragged men into their services as demand for manpower ballooned; and at the close of the war in 1715, large numbers of men became unemployed, haunting the docks for any merchant vessel in need of 'hands'.²⁷

The captains' dilemma thus took on sharper contours. On one side, English merchants defined successful voyages by the lowest possible costs in journey expenses, which meant lowering the food provisions and skimping on other basic needs. The captain's job was to ensure successful voyages and preside over lapses in provisions. On the other side, hired sailors were expressing dissatisfaction with conditions endangering their livelihood and their lives. The captains were given wide though not absolute powers of discipline for the job to maintain an 'aura of authority': it was an impossible management situation. Many mariners often had their wages or rations cheated from them by captains; and many were exposed to real physical harm from captains and officers, as not a few of them murdered outright their maritime employees. Acts of violence, regardless of who initiated them, were apparently rampant from 1715 to the 1730s: "...the years 1715-1737

stand out as especially brutal, containing three-quarters of all murders. The period 1723-35 conspicuously featured 60 percent of the homicides."²⁸

The revolts against British and international commerce during this period took the popular form of piracy. Marcus Rediker identified 1716 to 1726, the years he also believed were the most violent for maritime workers, as the high point of piratical insurgencies: "Anglo-American pirates created an imperial crisis with their relentless and successful attacks upon merchant's property and international commerce between 1716 and 1726."²⁹ These battles were developing into a pirate 'golden age', and at the same time when an important watershed in Bermuda's maritime commerce was developing.

At a meeting of Governor Benjamin Bennett and his Council in July 1719, concern was voiced about the scale of these piratical attacks, and specifically, about rumours of a pirate invasion of Bermuda. Bennett had apparently complained about the pirates to the Board of Trade and Plantations, as other colonial governors and merchants had. " 'I fear they will soon multiply,'" he is quoted to have stated, "'for so many are willing to joyn with them when taken.'"³⁰ That was the crux of the problem, and the governor felt obliged to repeat these concerns at the Governor's Council meeting in summer of 1719. He did not feel that Bermudian sailors raking salt at Turks Island were sufficiently inoculated from the temptation to give assistance to invading freebooters. He declared at the meeting that these men were taken by pirates and it was "...very detrimental to the Inhabitants of these Islands."³¹ His listeners seem to have been persuaded, and it was declared by an Order-in-Council that the number of 'white' men employed in the local merchant marine be circumscribed. It would deprive these pirates, they

convinced themselves, of potential pilots and at the same time expand the number of men available for the local muster.

One strongly suspects, given his concerns about the numerical health of the local forces and militia, that the latter consideration was for the governor the more compelling motivation. Nonetheless, no vessel of forty feet or more keel and belonging to and departing from the islands was to have "...any more white Sailors than Twelve..."; and no vessel of thirty-nine feet keel or less was to take out any more than nine 'white' sailors. But all captains of vessels of any dimension whatsoever could take out "...as many Negroes or other Slaves as he or they shall think proper." All sailors taken out by vessels were to be brought back to the islands by the same vessels they left in.

Thus began the expansion of the international reach of local 'black's trading', as 'Negroes', 'Mulattos', and 'Indians', bond or free, would begin to slowly expand their presence in the Bermudian merchant marine. Between 1708 and 1720, 1.4 out of 6 men (average) constituting a sloop's crew (about 28%) was either 'Negro', mulatto', 'Indian' or 'mustee'- 'black' according to eighteenth-century census parlance. This rose to 2.7 out of 8 or roughly 34% in 1720, an increase of about 6%.³² Crane cited a census of 1773-4 in which 40% of all 'black' men were recorded as sailors.³³

Those who were employed as mariners within the 'black' community were not all Bermuda-born and raised; and among the community of sailors were men with at least a foreign heritage. The list of passengers and crew departing from Bermuda noted two such sailors. One was an 'Indian' named Dego [read: Diego] who departed on the vessel *Edward and Hanna* on March 16, 1709.³⁴ Another

Dego was listed as a 'Negro', and was departing for Antigua on January 30, 1709. With both men, there is a suggestion of origin from a Spanish-speaking population and thus, by extension, a strong plausibility of Spanish-language proficiency. This was not a peculiar feature of these two sailors, but part of a foreign language capacity enjoyed by other enslaved Bermuda mariners. For example, one of the accusations, as will be noted, levelled against the 'Indian' sailor Tom (accused with Sarah Bassett of destroying the property of John Jennings and Stephen Paynter), that served as grounds for his transportation, was that he had recently 'taken up with French privateers, his majesties enemies'.³⁵ This required a capacity to communicate with them. The diversity in the origins of Bermudian slaves, discussed in the last chapter, plausibly led to a proficiency in Spanish, French or other languages among the group of enslaved sailors. There is no reason to assume that only the 'white' mariners and captains enjoyed the qualities of 'international men'.

Other slaves living in Bermuda also knew how to communicate in the languages of 'the queen's enemies'. A small example is recorded in the documents of Captain Anthony Atwood. The correspondent to Atwood described a slave called Desirée, transported from the French colonies to Bermuda, as, *inter alia*, speaking two languages: French and English.³⁶

It is in this context that an examination of the books of wills proves fruitful again. Out of the list of men recorded as 'at sea', two particularly 'Gold Coast' names appear suggesting a strategically important union of African, merchant, and sailor identities. The man identified earlier as Cobry, listed in the inventory of

Thomas Jenour, has been discussed. The other man was the sailor Mingo, the slave of Samuel Brangman whose 'Gold Coast' origin and progeny were discussed above. Mingo had previously been brought before a Court of the Justices of the Peace accused with several others of being "...absent from their Master and Mistress houses unseasonably in the Night time and for Sundry Other Ill Practices...". The accused were from St. George's or St. David's; and all but one were whipped by the authorities for this 'infraction'.³⁷ No explicit description was given as to what 'sundry other ill practices' meant to the justices, but one might have grounds to suppose the types of meetings held and connected with *obia* (and *voudou*). Nonetheless, Mingo, thirty-five years later, was still a mariner and possibly had children. By then, probably in his fifties, he was a prisoner-of-war of an unnamed enemy, and thus became a casualty of the War of the Austrian Succession. The African system of using names, *inter alia*, to blunt the pain of separation, took on a deeper poignancy in the naming of the boy, named Mingo, who was, as stated, possibly his son.

Significantly, a mariner with possible 'Gold Coast' connections will emerge in the discussion of the Conspiracy of 1761. He was Charles Cuff, whose surname was an abbreviation of Cuffey [read: Kuffi]. What is notable about Cuff is that he was a pilot, with a pilot's transferable skills to a deep-sea sailing. He was also a plausible union between 'Gold Coast' boatmen skills (noted earlier), the plausible extension of these skills into the Americas/Bermuda, and evidence of the involvement of a pilot in a revolutionary conspiracy (the Conspiracy of 1761).

Virtually every ship recorded in the passenger lists of ships clearing Bermuda in the early eighteenth century recorded slaves as sailors.³⁸ This put slave

sailors, according to the lists, at various destinations including Curacao,³⁹ St Christophers,⁴⁰ Sal Tortudas (in the Bahamas chain of islands),⁴¹ Jamaica,⁴² and Barbados⁴³. One ship en route to Jamaica in June 1720 had, of its forty-two crew members, sixteen 'Negroes' and two 'Indians'. Both the list of destinations, and the example of the exiled 'Indian' mariner Tom, begin to reveal parts of the maritime trade network of Bermudian bondservants and its connections within the larger Western Atlantic trading system.

Merchant-sailors generally, as was noted in the example of Mary Prince, did trade with slaves in the Caribbean. Descriptions of relations, particularly between merchant sailors and pilots, repeated (as noted), patterns found in West Africa between African pilots/boatmen and the coastal European merchants.⁴⁴ 'Black' pilots also navigated large ships through the shoals of the North American coast and even used the Revolutionary War as an opportunity to help in the military conquest of their masters: they led British marine forces through the shoals and into the rebellious southern colonies.⁴⁵ Bolster argued that 46% of enslaved mariners between 1732 and 1782 in South Carolina were sailors, defined by him as "...men who either crossed oceans or sailed extensively coastwise and could connect low-country slaves with blacks throughout the hemisphere." This combination of pilot and sailor was symbolised in Bolster's account of Shadwell, a 'Negro' man who had jumped ship in 1775. Shadwell had been a captain and pilot, and was "... 'well acquainted with all rivers inlets to the southward of Charleston.'" ⁴⁶ Bolster added:

Slaves like Shadwell, along with the slaves under his command, had considerable amounts of time without white supervision, substantial freedom of movement, and independent income from petty trading.⁴⁷

Twenty-five departures of sloops from Bermuda to Virginia-North Carolina, between 1708 and 1720, had on each of them mariners defined as 'black'. Bermuda's local 'black' provisioning network could thus silently make connections with those boatmen leading Bermuda sloops through treacherous North American shoals. Enslaved sloop-merchants established connections with islands to the south of Bermuda: 'black' sailors traded with a welter of inter-Caribbean drogher crews, hucksters and 'wharf Negroes' (like Mary Prince in Antigua), and coastal boatmen. Indeed, non-Bermudian sloops were often entirely staffed and managed by enslaved mariners, (reminiscent of Shadwell and his subordinates), and free from 'white' involvement or interference in any of their activities- such as trading with Bermudian slave sailors.⁴⁸ "As early as 1700," Bolster argued regarding Antigua, "Antigua's assembly noted that 'Taverns, victualling houses, punch houses, sloops, shallops, and Boats [that] belong to the Island, are for the most part managed by Negro Slaves, to the great Discouragement of White Men who want Employment.'"⁴⁹ A 1773 law went on to complain of how "...Diverse Felonies and frauds have been committed... by Means of Boats... being permitted to trade with Ships and Vessels in the Harbour and Road of St. John."⁵⁰ At least a few of these vessels would have been Bermudian: the official record, between 1708 and 1720, noted three vessels having left for the Leeward Islands, all of which had 'blacks' on board.⁵¹

'She knows I know: and I can hand it to you': tangibles and intangibles within 'Black' commercial and maritime provisioning

"He was a very wise man but they never liked him, you know." Mark Albouy was recalling his memories of Bermudian pilot Atticus Brangman to an interviewer in the 1970s. "He said to me 'just watch out- [if] there's a lot of Black men making a hundred pound this week out of stone, they'd pass a law against it.' And they did. They certainly did."⁵² Atticus Brangman was a St. George's pilot who had been born just nine years after the execution of the Emancipation Act, and lived until he was eighty-two. Albouy remembered how, throughout Brangman's long life as a pilot, the 'they' he made had reference to never respected his skill or the skill of any other 'black' pilot. "The policy has always been that a Black pilot didn't know nothing about navigation," Mr. Albouy mused. "They would put that all round to foreigners and all- the nasty things they say and tell people...".

But the influence the Bermudian seaman had on Mark Albouy was profound. The world view of a man whom historian Cyril Packwood referred to as 'Bermuda's griot' had been subtly shaped and guided by the less than invisible pilot's hand of Atticus Brangman: "...They never liked him..." Albouy continued; "I always was seen walking around with him and one lady, Miss- I think her name was Rankin...she used to play the organ in St. Peter's Church [said], 'You mustn't listen to everything he tells you- he'll lead you astray'."

"'You know why she told you that?'" the old sailor had retorted to Albouy. "She don't want you to accept anything that what I'm telling. She knows- she's

been around here- how the underhanded work that they used to do- she knows I know. And I can hand it to you.'"⁵³

The vignette highlights some of the intangible products of trade engaged in by Bermuda's 'plain dealers', to borrow a phrase of Rediker's: those of ideas and often radical ideas. For Mr. Albouy the intangible opened a view into the socio-political and socio-economic life of Bermuda, arising out of a different (and despised) perspective. This 'trading' repeated an ancient pattern of transmission that bubbled beneath and constituted the heat and fire of local resistance, and an eighteenth-century conspiracy. This education was recognised by Rediker in his discussion of 'white' sailors. He, with John Lax and William Pencak, suggested the influence of the Knowles Riot on the philosophy of North American republican and revolutionary Samuel Adams. It informed his advocacy of revolutionary resistance:

As Jesse Lemish argued about sailors of a later period, 'The seamen who defended himself against impressment felt that he was fighting to defend his "liberty", and that he justified his resistance on grounds of "right"'. ...Learning and deriving a creative impulse from this active "Spirit of Rebellion", Samuel Adams began the task of explaining, at the level of political discourse, what these working people were doing... Adams used the Knowles Riot 'to legitimise the right of the public forcibly to resist authority when it overstepped its bounds.' ...Further, Adams saw that the mob 'embodied the fundamental rights of man against which government itself could be judged.'⁵⁴

Pirates probably could have provided models for other 'Left-leaning' intellectuals, with their systems of elected captaincies, mass-mariner councils, and their ideologically informed attacks on international maritime commerce.⁵⁵ Benjamin Bennett's concern that 'white' sailors would join crews was expressed above and implied something of the influence these ocean-going radicals had on some 'white' Bermudian sailors.

It would be difficult to avoid making the suggestion that notions of resistance, bought and sold with great regularity within the maritime culture generally, would not have been bought and sold within the 'black' commercial network. Taverns were places where 'white sailors' met and talked, spending their wages and passing on their perspectives. Taverns or 'tippling houses' were also places where the enslaved sailors could meet and did; and Grand Jury presentments in Bermuda offer evidence of complaints about servile congregations, at least. Foreman William Richardson and his subordinate jurors, in the afternoon of February 10, 1725/6, presented to the Court of Assizes complaints about "... all such Disorderly persons that Sell and retail strong Liquor to Negroes & other Slaves on Sabbath days and fast days in time of Divine Worship." They continued:

We more particularly present that Negroes and other slaves as aforesaid do commonly wander about on such days and meet together where strong liquor is Sold and often Drink to Excess, Curse, Swear, Quarrel, fight, and Commit other wicked Acts.⁵⁶

They had complained about the behaviour of Inhabitants generally: the "...prophane cursing and swearing Tale bearing and Strife... lately practised among us to the Great Disturbance of our Inhabitants in Gen^l."⁵⁷ Yet their desire to have the perpetually deficient civil watches, among other persons, inspect the conversations of 'children and Negroes' may derive from more than a pious desire to stamp out verbal violations of the Ten Commandments; for in between the 'bad words' and the false witness, discussion of resistance plausibly arose. It was, indeed, such a discussion that Coffey had heard in 1721, and Vickers would overhear forty years later.

It was clear all congregations of enslaved sailors and other bondservants were opportunities to talk of things which the proprietors would probably not have

wanted their bondservants discussing. This is what John Vickers' deposition of 1761, again, made clear. What those accused conspirators expressed among their interlocutors were ideas incompatible with the legally enshrined 'customs of the country' governing slave property: that a person (regardless of whether defined as a slave in the law) had a right to use force, and deadly force, to protect access to his or her property. Peter, the pilot of Margaret Spencer who was implicated as a 'revolutionary', made precisely the point that no 'white' had the right to take his property off of him. He too was threatened with expulsion, in spite of his occupation as a pilot and the danger he would have posed to the islands in the hands of a foreign aggressor.⁵⁸ It was, thus, not just the 'Free Negroes' whose lifestyles might be deemed by the colonial elite as detrimental to the servile order, but this pilot as well; and like them he was to be expelled, to prevent him leading anyone astray.

Between 1700 and 1764 there were three major wars and bondsmen were used as sailors on privateer vessels. They also participated in the raids and were ruthlessly efficient⁵⁹ They probably felt they had little reason, particularly before 1790, to feel any sympathy for 'enemy sailors'. Nonetheless, as a means to shore up this enthusiasm, privateer captains and slave proprietors allowed slave sailors to keep some of the proceeds they commandeered that had not been condemned. Thus, in a clear way, privateering ventures became part of the independent self-provisioning operations of slave sailors. Some slave sailors thus made the most of

the opportunity. Bess' goods, for example, were acquired through her husband's involvement in privateering:

...one silver Table spoon of the value of ten shillings current Money of the said Islands, one silver tea spoon of the value of one shilling and four pence of like money, two Gold sleeve Buttons of the value of twelve shillings ... of like money, one red Silk petticoat of the value of two pounds of like money, one striped Silk Jacket of the value of three shillings and four pence of like money, six Damask Napkins of the value of sixteen shillings of like money, two white Holland shirts... of the value of six shillings and eight pence of like Money, three white Holland shirts of the value of one pound of like Money, two white Holland sheets of the value of thirteen shillings and four pence of like Money, four white ...[stockings] of the Value of five shillings and four pence of like money, seven Handkerchiefs of the value of one Pound three shillings, one white Holland Apron of the value of two shillings and eight pence of like money, and one pair of striped Silk Breeches of the Value of two shillings and eight pence of like Money, two men's Waist coats of the value of Six shillings and eight pence of like money, one pair of striped trousers of the value of one shilling and four pence of like Money, six yards and one Quarter of Calicoe of the value of one pound of like Money, one calicoe coverlid of the value of six shillings and eight pence of like money, one pair of white cotton stockings of the value of eight pence of like money one pillow case of the value of eight pence of like money, one Women's white Holland Jacket of the value of four pence of like money, one yard and three quarters of white lace of the value of one shilling of like Money, one yard and a quarter of lace of the value of one shilling of like money, and one Bunch of white sewing thread of the value of one shilling of like Money...⁶⁰

It was implied during the court case that some of these items were obtained by the wife, although it was not stated if she purchased them. Slave provisioning through trade was illegal, and Bess may have covered over this aspect of her activity successfully. If she had been trading, she would have enjoyed an advantage at market through her husband's privateering perquisites or 'Adventures'. These 'privileges' and 'adventures', nonetheless, constituted important tangibles in the maritime provisioning system.

'Tippling-houses', apart from being meeting areas for slaves and enslaved sailors, were part of the 'black' trading system and hence legislation controlling access to these reveal other tangibles of the system. The *Act to Prevent the*

Stealing of Oranges and Other Fruits (1698), confirmed in February 1708, noted: "...it is observed, That fveral Perfons in thefe Iflands, who keep Publick Taverns and Drinking Houses are the chieft Receivers and Buyers of Oranges, and other fruits of any Perfon whatsoever, who being the fame epecially of Negroes and Slaves...".⁶¹ The anxiety surrounding the Conspiracy of 1761 gave legislators an opportunity to accuse one particular group in this connection: 'Free Negroes' and 'Free Mulattoes'. As part of a much larger excuse to advocate their expulsion, Bermudian Assemblymen felt that it was "...notoriously known that they keep Tippling-houses for the Entertainment and reception of our Slaves, they secret the Inhabitants Goods, encourage our Slaves in theft, and not only give Advice and Assistance therein but by their Example promote them to vice & luxury...".⁶² This is vaguely reminiscent of events of 1656.

Slaves in the 1700s were accused of selling other items such as palmetto tops for plait and cedar wood. But a body of legislation emerged in 1730 to criminalise the international portion of this trading, again using the rumour that all goods sold by slaves were stolen from proprietors. Specifically, *An Act for the Further and Better Regulating Negroes and other Slaves, and for the More Effectual and speedy Way of Prosecuting Them in Criminal Causes*, gave a view as to the items of trade, beyond oranges, cedar branches, and palm-leaf plaits, of this network of 'black' commerce, local and international:

And whereas it is a common Practice amonft Negroes and other Slaves in these Islands to fend or carry abroad to other Places beyond Sea Adventures of Brass, Pewter, Platt, Bongraces, Caps &c. which cannot be procured by faid Slaves without ftealing...⁶³

Items discovered by the ship master on board his vessel, subsequent the Act of Assembly, were to be confiscated with no attempt to determine if the item was indeed 'stolen'; and, by extension, if 'stolen', no provision was made to have it returned to its 'rightful owner'. The item was to be taken by ship captains "...for their own use."⁶⁴ This extra-judicial confiscation, needless to say, provided an incentive for captains to reduce the use of their ships for external trading by slaves, and to end any other acts of collusion that might have been occurring between some free and bond merchant-sailors. Clearly, with no provision established to determine the exact status of the good in possession of the 'black', any desired good classified by the captain as stolen was open to confiscation. Effectively, at the very least, it stood to compromise 'black' commerce. Again, the real design of the legislation emerges, especially given the traditional government fixation on servile trading activities.

Legislation which ostensibly had no apparent relationship to slaves continued to reveal the tangibles of local and overseas 'black' commerce. Livestock, at least around the time of the Conspiracy of 1761, constituted a portion of this trade. William Popple, in that year, gave his assent to a law seeking to prevent the depletion of livestock in the colony, especially through exportation. The Assembly had passed *An Act to Prevent the Exportation of Neat Cattle Sheep and Hogs as of Poultry of all sorts except Ducks* (1761). The demand for such items in all the colonies, due to the Seven Years' War, would have meant that sailors could fetch a high price for certain types of livestock. But Bermuda was also in need of livestock.

Thus, any 'Negro or other slave' declared guilty of transporting neat cattle, sheep, hogs, and poultry out of the colony "...shall be publicly whipt at the discretion of such Justice or Justices of the Peace...".⁶⁵ Penalties were laid against the ship masters to prevent them from being counted on assisting in this exportation willingly. They, of course, were not given the option of the lash. But the penalties placed on slaves made it clear that their removal of these animals from the colony was at an extent enough to justify in the minds of legislators some prohibition of it. It was not inconceivable that within the network of servile commercial contacts, livestock constituted an element. Indeed, it constituted a profitable element, given the example of Mary Prince's livestock trading in Antigua.

Conclusion

Contradiction is the most basic explanation within a Marxian universe for the emergence of revolutionary change. Two classes, or groups, often born of the same forces, meet each other and realise that the fortunes of one are dependent on the dissolution of the other. A new society necessarily emerges out of this confrontation, a synthesis of two divergent forces.

Bermuda's socio-economy and socio-politics produced two such classes: an incumbent one of proprietors and proprietor-merchants; and a challenging group of enslaved as Africans or merchant-sailors or African-merchant-sailors.

The incompatible plans they respectively generated fuelled the explosion known as the Conspiracy of 1761. But this conflict was intimated in the statements of Coffey in 1721: he would inform Stoaks of what to expect as the fate of her property in the aftermath of such a revolt; and he did not need North American slaveholding republicans, or French bourgeois radicals to reveal to him the virtues of a re-distribution of property and power.

Thus, concludes the last of the four contextual chapters for the discussion of poison resistance and revolution. It is now possible to examine the events themselves, and to construct a narrative around the rise and fall of violent and revolutionary resistance.

Endnotes: Chapter IV

- ¹ Hilary Beckles, "An Economic Life of their Own: slaves as commodity producers and distributors in Barbados", *Slavery and Abolition*, 12:1 (May 1991), p. 33.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-3.
- ⁴ Woodville Marshall, "Provision Ground and Plantation Labour in Four Windward Islands: competition for resources during slavery", *Slavery and Abolition*, 12:1 (May 1991), p. 50.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- ⁶ *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, edited by Tom Bottomore (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 363.
- ⁷ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, p. 190.
- ⁸ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *Statute Law of Bermuda, 1620 to 1952*, vol. 5, p. vi.
- ⁹ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *Acts of the House of Assembly, 1690-1723*, p. 12.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ¹¹ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, p. 190.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 191.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ¹⁴ AZ 102 6, 1726-35, pp. 252-3.
- ¹⁵ Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, p. 67.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-53.
- ¹⁸ Henry Hamilton to the Bishop of London, Fullham Papers, Lambeth Palace, vol 17, pp. 51-4.
- ¹⁹ See *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, pp. 166-170. R.H. Hilton noted: "The fundamental antagonism in feudal society was between landlords and peasants. The conflict was mostly concealed, sometimes overt as in the great peasant risings of the late Middle Ages. It was fundamental in another sense. Peasants, in their communities and as controllers of the self-contained family enterprise were not *economically* dependent on lords. For this reason their potentialities for resistance were not negligible. Hence, if the level of rent was determined not so much by market forces as by the relative strength of the antagonists, a strengthening of peasant resistance reduced the level of rent transferred to the ruling class- and of tax to the state. This was the roots of the crisis of the feudal order." [*italics in text*] The parallel may be deemed more exact when the true nature of Bermuda's servile self-production is understood. See *ibid.*, p. 170.
- ²⁰ *Bermuda Gazette*, Saturday, March 22, 1800.
- ²¹ Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, p. 68.
- ²² See below, chapter VI: "The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Resistance: 1761-64".
- ²³ AZ 102 11, 1780-4, p. 99.
- ²⁴ AZ 102 5, 1720-25, p. 181.
- ²⁵ AZ 102-6, 1726-35 p. 252.
- ²⁶ AZ 102 11, 1780-4, p. 99.
- ²⁷ Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, passim; W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), passim.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 215.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 254.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 260.
- ³¹ EXCO 1706-21, p. 120.
- ³² *Masters, Passengers, Sailors from Bermuda*, passim.
- ³³ Crane, "Socioeconomics of a Female Majority", p. 245; see footnote 39.
- ³⁴ *Masters, Passengers, Sailors from Bermuda*, p. 29.
- ³⁵ *Courts of the Justice of the Peace*, pp. 467-43.
- ³⁶ Letter of John Waters to Anthony Atwood, Atwood Commercial Papers 1759-1804, P.A. 2145 & 95:001.
- ³⁷ *Courts of the Justice of the Peace*, pp. 508-9.
- ³⁸ *Masters, Passengers, Sailors from Bermuda*, passim.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29; re. Sam 'Negro' and Tony 'Negro' on a four man sloop *Elizabeth*, March 17, 1708/9.

- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 29; re. Dego [Diego] 'Indian' on sloop *Edward and Hannah* 5 men, Mar. 16, 1708/9.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p. 29; Dick 'Negro' of Justice of the Peace Dickinson, on the *Ruth* of James Bassett, five men, Mar. 10, 1708/9.
- ⁴² Ibid., p. 79; Sam 'Indian' and Tom 'Negro' of D. Lusher and Sarah Gibbs respectively, aboard the sloop *Deborah*, fourteen men, June 30, 1720.
- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 75; re. Will and Jack both 'negroes' of Capt. John Gilbert, on the *Jane*, six men and three passengers, June 14, 1720.
- ⁴⁴ Bolster, *Black Jacks*, passim.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 23.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 23-4.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 24.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 19.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 17.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 17.
- ⁵¹ *Masters, Passengers, Sailors from Bermuda*, passim.
- ⁵² Mark Albouy, interview by Florenz Webbe-Maxwell, May 1979, Bermuda, transcript, p. 49.
- ⁵³ Ibid., p. 51.
- ⁵⁴ Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, pp. 252-3.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 264.
- ⁵⁶ AZ 102 5, 1720-25, p. 326.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 326.
- ⁵⁸ See below, chapter VI: "The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Resistance: 1761-64".
- ⁵⁹ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 39. Packwood added: "Captain Sam Lightbourne, Sam and Thomas Hutchings, admitted that the prize masters had no control over their crews. They really did not want to control the slave crews, because they benefitted from whatever was seized. All plunder went to the captains and to the slave's owner; only a small portion went to the slaves. On the whole, slaves got very little from 'acts of piracy', except an opportunity to give vent completely to their frustrations, in a kill or be killed situation."
- ⁶⁰ AZ 1780-84, p. 99.
- ⁶¹ *Acts of the Assembly, 1690-1723*, pp. 49-50.
- ⁶² CO 37 19, p. 64.
- ⁶³ Ibid., pp. 94-7.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 95.
- ⁶⁵ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *Acts of Assembly 1755-99*, p. 97.

Chapter V

'The Horrid Villainy': Poisoning Episodes in Bermuda, 1727-1730

Prologue

Sarah, Sally, or 'Sary' Bassett was an elderly 'mulatto' woman. She, within the first week of June 1730, was capitally convicted of attempting to kill by poison the two owners of her granddaughter Beck (Thomas and Sarah Foster [read: Forster]) and the Foster family's slave girl Nancey. Her sentence was to be burned to death in the fashion of a witch, the first live burning ordered in the eighteenth century.

Sarah Bassett was from Southampton Tribe. She was not officially owned by anyone, or at least anyone living. Her previous owner, a Southampton blacksmith named Francis Dickinson, had died around 1726;¹ and according to his will, written when he was "...Sick and weak of Body...", a group of his 'negroes' was to be inherited by his young children Sarah and Daniel Dickinson- after his debts and the funeral expenses had been paid.² Sarah Bassett was presumably among this group.

Equally significant is an event occurring fourteen years before Francis Dickinson's death. Two 'white' proprietors, Captain John Jennings and Stephen Painter, had discovered that several of their cattle and horses were dead, and some other damage had been done to their property. The blame fell on Bassett and a man named 'Indian Tom'- the latter previously owned by the then deceased John Dickinson.

But the case against 'Indian Tom' is noteworthy for another reason. Painter had claimed before the Court of the Justices of the Peace that he had felt in danger for his life with Tom living in the colony. He begged for Tom's transportation. The court agreed with Painter, and supported its expulsion with the premises that the 'Indian' had "...*Lately [been] known to take up Arms with the French Privateers- Enemies to the Crown of Great Britain... And also known to be a Notorious Thief who hath Committed Several Roberies in these Islands...*"[italics added]³ This linkage between Tom and Sarah Bassett is of great importance to the developing argument of both the chapter and the thesis.

Bassett was not held responsible for the destruction to Jennings' and Painter's property, probably since the court had at hand another legal pretext for punishing her. Three witnesses (Anne Taylor, Sarah Brown, and Henry Todd) claimed that they heard Bassett "...Swear and Threaten the said Jennings..." with the implication that something was to happen to him on the twenty-sixth of January of that year. Then, on the twenty-sixth, damage occurred to the property of Jennings and Painter.⁴ It was for her statements against Jennings that the court ordered Sarah Bassett to be "...publicly whipt throughout Southampton Tribe aforesaid on Saterday Next Being the thirty-first Instant [of January] by the Constables of that Tribe She receiving three lashes well laid on her naked Back at the End of every thirty paces from the West End of the said Tribe to the East End of the same."⁵

Nothing was stated of the cause of this conflict between Jennings and Bassett or of the apparently long-standing one between Painter and Tom. Yet Jennings was the Southampton Justice of the Peace, the Tribe in which Bassett

and Tom lived. Early conflict over the laws which bondservants particularly disliked fed ongoing hostilities in slave societies; and Jennings, a prominent man in social and political circles (he was to become member of the Governor's Council by the 1730s and would serve as Speaker of the House of Assembly), might have been more zealous, or ruthless, in the enforcement of legislation. Attacking what Jennings valued belonged to a class of resistance popular among the bondservants. Nonetheless, Bassett's early recorded expression of spiritedness was avenged in a somewhat ruthless manner.

Twenty years later, Bassett became the central figure in the local legends through her connection with one of the 'poison plot' conspiracies.⁶ Yet questions arise concerning the reality of these plots and the role she played in at least one of them; the ends they were used to achieve and the type of individuals identified with them. These questions will be addressed in this chapter; and her story will be fitted into an examination of this violent form of servile resistance.

I. The Poisoning Conspiracies, 1727-30

The official discussion of the poison plots began in 1730, the year ironically when the Independent Company militia had been removed from Bermuda to the Bahamas. This idea is supported in the journey of a letter that had

wended its way through the British metropolitan government late in 1731. The letter had been signed by the representative of Bermuda's commercial interests in Britain, Ralph Norden (or Noden) "... in behalf of himself and the rest of the Merchants of London Trading to Your Maj.¹⁵ Collonies in America and in particular to the Island of Bermuda... and also in behalf of the Inhat it¹⁵ of the aforesaid Island."⁷

It began by explaining almost immediately the role the Independent Company had played in the "...Protection and defense of... [the] Island...", how it had been sent by King William III and how it was ('ill-advisedly') removed in February 1730. According to Norden, from the moment of its departure, threats to the internal peace and security, as he conceived them, arose: "...the Negroes on that Island...have destroyed many of Your Majesties Subjects by Poyson many more are now lingering under that Misfortune whose lives are dispaired of..."; 'Negroes', in spite of the discovery, conviction, and public punishment of poison plotters, were still meeting "...in numbers in a Most Mutinous manner, conceived to be with an Intent utterly to extirpate and destroy Your Majestys Subjects on that Collony..."; and after reminding the king and Privy Council that 'insolence' by 'Negroes' had been unknown while the Independent Company was there, it made a vague statement about "...Insults from Enimies and Pirates abroad...". It was an allusion to what the Privy Council in December of 1731 noted in its report on the petition, of the Spanish ship which, not more than six months after the departure of the Independent Company, had attempted to make a raid on Bermuda. This raid had apparently been foiled by winds which blew the vessel off course. "Your Petitioner", Ralph Norden concluded, "most humbly Prays Your Majesty will be

Graciously pleased to order the Company back again to Bermuda, so that the Estates of Your Majesties Subjects Trading thereto as well as the Valuable Collony may be duly Protected and Preserved."⁸

The petitioner had greatly enlarged on the facts to make his case more urgent: at the very least, his presentation of events was at variance with what was found in other sources. His argument, for example, that "...the Negroes...are much more numerous than the white people..."⁹ clearly runs afoul of a string of statistical compilations for that period. Governor John Pitt, for example, in his responses to the enquiries of 1731, wrote that "...[b]y an Exact Account taken this present year 1731 the number of white Inhabitants amounts to four thousand three hundred and fifty three; Blacks three thousand two hundred and forty-eight."¹⁰ 'White' demographic numerical predominance was the characteristic feature of colonial society for all but the last thirty years of the slavery era. One might even argue that the need for Pitt to 'talk up' his statistics (characterising them as "... an *Exact* account...") may have reflected his desire to contradict Norden.

Nonetheless, the 'presentments' of the Courts of Assizes juries are, of course, important toward understanding local concerns of widespread poisoning, or any other problem; and they allow one to further contextualise the Norden presentation. The ongoing complaint of these presentments, in fact, had little to do with poisoning, and more to do with other issues, such as a rising tension between 'black' and 'white' castes in the colony. It concerned the other problem surfacing in the Norden communication, of 'Negroes caballing together'.¹¹ If one ignores the fact that the archival collections of the Courts of Assizes papers for 1726-7 are transcriptions from the original (and that some pages of the transcription are

missing), complaints about 'Negro' behaviour had nothing to do with the administration of poison before 1730. Indeed, presentments discussed general 'infractions', such as 'riotous meetings', wearing 'fine cloths', 'stealing' and digging out palmettos (for sale as part of the 'black' commercial network). But not one mention was made of poisoning until 1730.

Between June 1730 and 1731, two jury presentments made mention of poisoning; but, again, what is significant is that they never arose before February 1730. This argumentation does run the risk of committing what Martin Bernal once called an 'argument from silence': when it is suggested that the absence of *data about an event* constitutes itself evidence of the absence of the event.¹² But given the tendency of a source, such as a jury presentment collection, to mention what one might suggest are very tedious and banal problems, such as the complaint of Elizabeth Cunningham's 'dangerous house' (that is a house liable to cause accidents), or the dangerous lime kilns on the land of Mary Underwood, or "...the Door of a House belonging to Capt: Thomas Hunt...being dangerous by it's Opening in the Highway...", or the dangerous places of William Place, William Hesom, and George Gibbs, one is liable to expect that if there were widespread poisoning episodes, they would have been at least been mentioned.¹³ Indeed, they were- *after* February 1730.

The minutes of the Governor's Council also fail to mention poisoning, at least until after March 1730; and after the passage of a new Act ordering 'Free Negroes', 'Free Indians', and 'Free Mulattos' out of the islands. This, of course, was a month after the Independent Company was relocated to New Providence. Some time subsequently, the Council had ordered three Justices of the Peace to

investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of Thomas Minott, and question "... all persons white or Black suspected of poisoning in their respective tribes."¹⁴ It seems that Pitt had begun the concerted effort to 'extirpate' the poison plotters.

Again, as with the presentments, other things concerned the Governor's Council as they related to the 'Negroes' before 1730. Norden notwithstanding, the Council was drawing up, in 1724, its own definitions of 'insolence'. It demanded, in its justifying preamble, that Justices of the Peace "... take particular care that the Laws against Negroes be forthwith published and that Watches be kept with utmost strictness." It had complained of the "...Impudent Behaviour of negroes and other Slaves to white people and the miserable State the Country was in by their thieving...". Officials were blamed for not enforcing the laws. As a result, constables were ordered by the governor-in-council to lash, fifty times on the naked back, any 'Negroes' (specifically, any non-elderly and non-infirm 'Negroes') found wandering abroad and with a stick.¹⁵

Thus, complaints, at this early stage, had nothing to do with poisoning, but with what certain 'whites' saw as a rising level of 'insolence'. The idea that poison plots became conceived as an *official* problem in 1730 (and after the removal of the Independent Company in February of that year) is plausible. Indeed, a chronology can be built to underscore the link between the militia's departure and the concern over poisonings.

If one begins with its departure in February 1730, by March 11, 1730 the Governor's Council minute book was recording a meeting of a committee of three to discuss the passage of regulative legislation: *An Act for Extirpating All Free*

*Negroes, Indians, Mallattoes such have been slaves etc.*¹⁶ This Act may have been working its way through the Assembly in 1729, but it was to be debated and passed in 1730, the following year.¹⁷ After it was returned to the Assembly for re-examination, four Justices of the Peace (Paul Paynter, William Tucker, John Harvey and Richard Hunt) were ordered to "...examine... all persons white or black suspected of poisoning in their respective tribes." Particularly singled out were two women, one a 'Negro' named Affey, and the other her owner, a 'white', the wife of Thomas Minott. They were placed under suspicion of poisoning Minott.¹⁸ What is important for the chronology of events is that the investigation began in May 1730; by June at least several suspects were coming to trial, and before the end of June one of these was to have been executed.¹⁹ One can surmise that roughly after that time, the expulsions from the colony began and the other punishments were anticipated; as Pitt put it succinctly: "...one wooman... [to be] burnt and a man Hang'd severall Tranfported to ye Spanifh West Indies..."²⁰

Several preliminary arguments can now be made. One can begin from the position that the sudden departure of the militia in the eyes of some colonial proprietors was welcomed with less than apparent peace of mind. Already concerned about the 'danger' arising from the lack, as they saw it, of able-bodied men (exacerbated by undesired male to female sex-ratios), increasing 'insolence' (night walking, plundering, etc.), and the conceived incapacity of the policing structure to offer much security, the tendency to overstate the case to the British government proved too strong to resist. The departure of the King's Independent Company thus occurred when proprietors felt vulnerable to the results of a rising tension between them and the bondservants. Complaints of 'general insolence'

dominated until news reached the Council that one of its 'prominent' citizens, Thomas Minott, had been killed by poison, albeit in 1727. Thus the wording of the order to investigate made clear that it was that case, *before Bassett's*, which was of initial concern. Justices of the Peace were to seek out poison plotters, 'white' or 'black', and they were to begin with Minott's household.

It was from the Minott case that all other alleged incidences were investigated, probably creating a scare that scarcely existed before May 1730. Norden's dire and exaggerated presentation of events, however, served to try to bring back the Independent Company. He sought to make the case for Bermuda stronger than that offered by the pirate-beleaguered Bahamas Islands. He and others would thus phrase the request in language the British government would appreciate: subversion of the 'His Majesty's local government' by 'insults from home and abroad'; and dire consequences promised if either Spanish pirates or the 'Negroes' were left in possession of the colony.

As stated, the case which initiated the first round of prosecutions began with the investigation of the death of Devonshire proprietor Thomas Minott. Minott had died in 1727. His apparently sudden death was not investigated until three years later, when the much larger political events (noted earlier) resulted in the examination of Ruth and her surviving proprietor by the Justices of the Peace.

Minott or Mynott had been a member of the Assembly, representing Devonshire, as early as *circa* 1701 when his name appeared in a list of the legislators for each parish. It is a list that contains the names of other men who

came to occupy some prominence. John Jennings and Samuel Sherlock are the most notable. Both were later elevated to the Governor's Council.²¹

When Minott's name appears again, it is as a signature to a petition outlining how happy he and several others were with Governor Bennett, begging that Queen Anne continue him in his office. It is surrounded by the names of other prominent individuals; and, notably, under the names of the signatories for Southampton Tribe, appeared the name of the blacksmith owner of Sarah Bassett, Francis Dickinson.²² The last major appearance of Mynott's name in the records occurred on April 24, 1728, when an inventory of his estate was undertaken, the consequence of his death in 1727. It is interesting that prominent Hamilton Tribe merchant Henry Corbusier was recorded as the administrator of his estate. Captain Corbusier was three years later to serve as the foremen of the jury which heard the case of Sarah Bassett.²³

But what is more important is Minott's connection with the inventory of Daniel Durham, a mariner who had died in 1700. He is recorded in the inventory as an appraiser of Durham's property.²⁴ There was a woman, listed and valued in the inventory as worth £27-00-00; and she was called Ruth.²⁵ The name Ruth appears along with James in the inventory of Minott's property twenty-eight years later. Both in Minott's inventory were valued at £1-5-0 and £18-10-00 respectively.²⁶ The extremely low valuation given to Ruth, at a time when a 'Negro' woman could be valued at between £28 to £30, leads one to suggest that she was possibly quite old.²⁷ But there may have been another reason, which brings the discussion back to Affey.

There were only two people recorded in the inventory of Thomas Minott in 1727: Ruth and James. Yet Affey and her female owner were interviewed two years later. Her absence from the inventory, which is virtually always comprehensive in its listing of slaves, may lie in that Affey and Ruth were one and the same, with the low evaluation reflective, in 1727, of her age. The idea gets some support from the account records for the Governor's Council, published in the minutes of November 3, 1731. It was a tabulation of, *inter alia*, the costs of various trials held over the past two years and under the aegis of the Council. Two 'Negroes' were listed as brought to trial in an interesting notation: "...Justices & freeholders for the Tryal of negroes James & Ruth £3-6."²⁸ James was the name of a slave appearing in the Mynott inventory. If James and Ruth of the minutes were the same two persons appearing in the inventory, then it appears that the investigation stretched wider than the two women interviewed in 1730.

It also means that Mrs. Minott, not listed, was not brought to trial as a participant. It seems plausible then, that Ruth was Affey, and that both she and James were tried for Mr. Minott's 'murder'. The records of their trial do not appear in the Bermuda Archives at all, though it is clear that there was a trial of a Ruth and a James, according to the Council minutes. It is also clear, from the notation, that Ruth and James were not given an assizes trial by jury, as Bassett had been. Their trial seems to have occurred some time between November 1730 and November 1731.²⁹ This is significant, as the *Act for the Better Regulation of Negroes, Indians and Mulattoes* (1730), was in operation. It had made a provision that those accused of poisoning were to be tried by three Justices of the Peace and four freeholders and not by a jury of twelve men. Of the four freeholders

appointed to hear poisoning cases, one included Captain Henry Corbusier, the foreman of the jury that had been concerned with the Sarah Bassett case.³⁰

But the idea of the identity of Affey and Ruth is notable, further, in light of the general thesis about the African contribution to the poison method. Affey fits phonetically well with the 'Gold Coast' name Afia (also Afua), when abbreviated into 'Afi'. Afia, according to John Sarbah, was, for the Fanti, the female complement of the male name Koffi. Other versions of the name were Effua and Efua.³¹ Julia Stewart, moreover, noted that Afi was a modern *kra* name for persons in the Republic of Ghana she identified as Twi-speakers.³² Afi, of course, provides a close phonetic fit to Affey.

Affey was probably an alternative name of Ruth, and that Affey was plausibly the elderly Ruth of 1730. Moreover, either Affey/Ruth was born on the 'Gold Coast' (as was more likely) or the daughter of someone who was and who maintained Fanti/Akan or 'Gold Coast' naming traditions. A possible age of sixty or seventy would fit well with the mature woman named Ruth listed in Daniel Durham's inventory. Concerning this connection, an interesting hypothesis emerges that Minott may have secured control of her, as administrator of Durham's property (not an uncommon practice in the 1700s) and kept her as his property until his own death in 1727.

Nonetheless, someone clearly thought that Minott's death was the result of co-operation between Affey and Mrs. Minott, suggesting some skills the elderly Ruth possessed or, at least, was known to have possessed. Whatever became of Ruth and James after their trial is not known, and the possibility that they were

transported emerges, assuming James was not the unnamed man Pitt noted had been hanged.

The Governor's Council minutes balance sheet contained, in the same enumeration which listed James and Ruth, a reference to the "...trial of the Negro Cockoo".³³ As with James and Ruth no trial records appeared for Cockoo. There are many things, therefore, that are for now unknown about this individual: sex, parish of origin, whether Cockoo was acquitted or convicted, what Cockoo was charged with, and who Cockoo's owner was, if he or she had one. Nonetheless, two points of importance to this study of resistance can be determined tentatively. The name itself is notable as it fits phonetically well, if not perfectly, with the 'Gold Coast' day name for men: Kwáku, meaning Wednesday.³⁴ Whether this was the man Pitt referred to as having been hanged (assuming Cockoo was a man) is unclear. What is notable is that he, like Ruth and James, was also tried by three Justices of the Peace and four freeholders, and thus (as an accused poison plotter) came under the judgement of Henry Corbusier. He possibly was convicted and punished/executed between late 1730 and late 1731. Cockoo, that is, could easily have been the man hanged for poison; if so, a further 'Gold Coast' contribution to the poison plots is underscored.

Finally, the fates of Cockoo and Ruth/Affey seem to have been shaped by a general concern over 'foreign slaves'. This is clear from the passage of legislation placing a bounty on all slaves *imported* to the islands, passed in 1730. It would have, when not transgressed, had the effect of cutting off one source for the increases in slave numbers (contrary to what Pitt and Alured Popple were telling

the Lords of Trade and Plantations); and it also would have ensured that a population of Bermudian creoles numerically predominated.

Sarah Bassett was tried before the provisions of the Act of Assembly governing the trial of 'Negroes' took effect; and thus, she appears to have been the only person accused of poison to have a trial by jury. The result is that her trial was in the local records, within the body of documents of the Courts of Assizes minutes. This ensured, in no small part, her fame. The case provides an anatomy of the possible motives and means of the poisoning plots. This justifies a detailed examination of it.

The case 'against' Sarah Bassett

"For that she the said Sarah Bassett, not having the fear of God before her Eyes, But being moved and seduced by ye Instigation of the Devil...": this is how the indictment presented by the Grand Jury to the Court of Assizes of 1730 began its long and torturous accusation against the elderly mulatto.³⁵ Only the transcription of the original court record is available in the Bermuda Archives. Typed several years ago, it in essence constitutes the bulk of anything known and available touching on Sarah Bassett.

Nonetheless, according to this transcription, Sarah Bassett visited her granddaughter Beck, apparently finding her in the Fosters' kitchen. It was just a week before Christmas Day, December 18, 1729. Bassett was carrying with her various substances wrapped in two separate rags containing several types of poisons: rats-bane, 'manchioneel root', and a white substance that was further

along in the indictment referred to as 'white toade'. Beck was 'ordered' to distribute the poisons in a specified way. One group was to act as an inhalant and another to be added to the food of Thomas and Sarah Foster.

"And so," concluded the indictment, "ye sd jurors aforesaid Do present and say that on their Oaths as aforesaid that the day and year aforesaid, and at Sandys tribe aforesd, the said Sarah Bassett did then and there in maner and fform aforesaid of her Evil & wicked intention, and of her Malice aforethought The said Thos: Foster & Sarah his wife & the said Negro Nancey, did ffeloniously poyson against the fform of the statutes in such Cases made and provided and against the peace of our said Sovereign Lord the King his Crown and dignity &c:."³⁶ Chief Justice William Outerbridge presided over the court, and was assisted by John and Moore Darrell.³⁷ The controversial Edmund Bromwich served as attorney for the crown. Sarah Bassett represented herself.

Bassett's trial began on June 1, 1730 in the town of St. George's, on the ground floor of the Sessions or State House. Normally the venue for the meetings of the House of Assembly, it became that month the location of the Courts of Assizes. Crowds probably filled the square as the woman at the centre of the 'horrid villainy' was taken from the St. George's jail to the Sessions House.

Yet the case against Sarah Bassett was 'conclusive' according to the rules governing her trial. These regulations constituted the *Act for the Trying of Negroes and Slaves*, which had first been passed in 1690, and confirmed (about the time when Thomas Minott sat in the Assembly) under Benjamin Bennett in 1704. According to the Act, the ability of the prosecution to secure a conviction against a 'Negro or other slave' for the type of crime Bassett was accused of required either

one 'white person of discretion' giving positive evidence against the defendant; or, if the prosecution lacked such a person, one or more 'white' persons under oath giving "...good circumstances relating to the fact..." (of the indictment). To fully satisfy the latter condition, one 'black', at least, was necessary "...agreeing therewith...".³⁸

Edmund Bromwich had more than enough to satisfy the second legal stipulation. Ten 'white' people made the journey from the extreme western parishes to St. George's to present evidence as 'circumstances relating to the fact' that Sarah Bassett had ordered the poisoning of the Fosters and Nancey. Ten braved either the long horse-ride or the tedious sea journey to the island of St. George's to give evidence against the Southampton woman; and this was in spite of the possibility of an expensive overnight sojourn in the colonial capital. Four, however, were obliged to appear to provide the circumstantial evidence Bromwich used in the prosecution of Bassett: Anne Thomas, Benjamin Dickinson, Samuel Dickinson and Jane Paynter. Of the ten called "...sworn and directed to attend the Grand Jury..." one included the victim of the poisoning, Sarah Foster. She seems to have recovered sufficiently to travel from one end of the island to the other, though the indictment said that she, her husband, and their slave "...are now sick and Lye in a very Languishing & dangerous Condition...".³⁹ It may reflect the strong determination of Sarah Foster to see and ensure that the woman allegedly responsible for her condition was punished by the courts.

Yet it was on Beck's evidence that the factual constitution of the charge depended. She, following the regulations of the Act of Assembly, outlined how Sarah Bassett ordered the distribution of the toxins, testimony that would be

compatible with the circumstantial evidence given by the 'whites'. Given the volume of convicting testimony, it was not surprising that when Bassett was asked to respond to the charges, she "...made some slender denyall of the fact & said no more."⁴⁰

The Jury of Life and Death (a body cobbled together to decide capital cases) did not lose much time to render its verdict. Its foreman, Henry Corbusier, declared they had found Bassett guilty. Returned for a short time to the St. George's jail, she was brought back up the hill to the Sessions House to hear her sentence. The Chief Justice asked her for any statement that might mitigate her impending sentence, to which she gave the only other denial of the indictment: "...[she] answered," wrote the clerk, "she never deserved it." The Chief Justice thus declared: "It is the Judgment and Sentence of this Court, that you Sarah Bassett be return'd to the prison from whence you Came and from thence you are to be convey'd to the place of Execution where a pile of wood is to be made & provided, and you are thereto be fasten'd to a sufficient Stake and there to be burnt with fire untill Your body be Dead."⁴¹

It is obvious that the trial records hold limited utility in determining whether Sarah Bassett did indeed plan the poisonings. The trial they were based on was a show trial, its publicity and public nature serving political purposes; and the predominant political purposes were extremely clear. For Governor John Pitt, the trial had to produce a result: her guilt, conviction and public execution to pacify local and metropolitan audiences. This would keep local proprietors at ease and both groups confident in his administration. Indeed, after boasting of the

impending punishments he had given final sanction to, he concluded: "...wee are now alitle easy, but am afraide not quite secure but doe assure yr Lordshipp nothing shall bee wanting in mee towards extirpating them Intirely, and doeing every thing else for ye honour of his most sacred majesty & the good of ye people I have the Honour to governe."⁴² If the public was not yet 'secure', it was still due to the matter of the absent Independent Company, which others were still petitioning for. That the Independent Company had a calming influence might, again, be suggested from the presentments that, from June 12, 1730, did not mention poisonings- though Juries still complained about 'Negro insolence'.⁴³ The 'poisoning *scare*' had clearly ended.

Of course, the pre-eminent political motivation of both colonial and metropolitan leaders in Bermuda was social control: to frighten the slaves away from this conspiratorial poisoning and into greater submissiveness. According to tradition, Bassett was executed at the foot of Crow Lane. It was an advantageous to have such a didactic punishment as the one ordered for Bassett. The immolation would have occurred not just close to her friends, family and associates in Southampton, but near areas that had been the locations of the investigated poisoning conspiracies. The foot of Crow Lane was itself a busy intersection, relatively speaking, overlooking a wide well-utilised bay. Those in the western parishes, thus, tempted to collude with poisoning conspirators, had the grisly impression of the light of Bassett's immolation blazing at the other end of the sound.⁴⁴

But another location for the execution may be speculated from an interpretation of Outerbridge's sentence of death. He had ordered that Bassett be

returned to prison *and then conveyed to the place of execution*. At the time 'the place of execution' in St. George's was Gallows Island, the former location of witch punishments and a ducking stool. As a result of land reclamation, it was later combined with then nearby Hen Island to form what is today called Ordinance Island. Nonetheless, there was no escaping the image of any exemplary punishment occurring at Gallows Island. Her immolation, if it took place there, would have been seen and smelt by onlookers crowding the square, by anyone returning from sea, even by fishermen, farmers, bondservants and other willing or unwilling spectators as far away as the coast of St. David's Island. The colony's legislators, government officials and judges would have had a perfect view from the hill of the Sessions House, as the building once dominated the skyline of the town of St. George's. Persons of every social description, living in or near the administrative capital of the colony would have had the opportunity to experience the sight of Bassett's execution. It would have been, thus, a logical place to quickly and publicly and didactically destroy the elderly bondservant, without the expense of placing her on a transport and paying further fees to her warders. The very structure of the death sentence itself, again, might allow one to believe that it was meant to have been carried out quickly.

Yet the immolation, as stated earlier, explained the ostensible evaporation of poisoning conspiracies, until an alleged re-emergence of them in the 1750s-and, of course, their inclusion into the Conspiracy of 1761. William Zuill, in a passing comment about the punishment of Sarah Bassett, noted: "It is curious, that while so many punishments have been forgotten, the burning of Sally Bassett should have made such a deep impression that it became a Bermuda legend."⁴⁵ It

was as if the frightful scene had seared its way deeply into the local 'collective sub-consciousness': the lasting legacy of the punishment of Sarah Bassett.

Yet, whatever the limited utility of the trial records in allowing one to determine (with them alone) the nature of Bassett's involvement, there are some strong reasons to believe that Sarah Bassett did plan the murders of the Fosters and Nancey. Unpacking this point advances theories not only about the sophistication of her method, but about the deep and intense feelings of antipathy that led to the event: that is, in the evolution of motive and means. These theories underscore the view that the poison plots occurring between 1727 and 1730 were professional, personal, obviously violent, and non-revolutionary in intent.

Examination of means divides itself into an analysis of two aspects of Bassett's poisoning process: preparation and administration. They must be viewed within the context of the earlier discussion on *voudou*. Of the substances meant for the 'victuals' of both Thomas and Sarah Foster, there was one at first described as "...ye other white [in colour]... and again "...the sd white toade...".⁴⁶ It is significant that the substance extracted from the parotid gland of South American and African large toads was noted to be white in colour. E. Wade Davis noted that chemicals from that gland induce, *inter alia*, accelerated physiological phenomena (through, for example, adrenaline and bufotenine). But the glands also produce substances stored in the skin of the animal- the muscle relaxant toxins. A combination of some of these toxins in the substance would speed up the muscle relaxant poisons. A slow and creeping paralysis of the muscle (caused by relaxant chemicals) and attendant laboured breathing could have easily produced the visual effect of victims "... in a very languishing and dangerous condition...".⁴⁷ At the

very least, the adrenaline 'cocktail' would have enhanced in Sarah Foster whatever substances that had been released from the 'readish' dose. Interestingly, a confusion seems to have emerged between the substance produced by the parotid gland of the toad, and the toad itself, with the latter called a 'white toad'. This may have been through the court or even Beck, linking in mind the substance and the substance's origin. But it is clear that at the very least, the substance was white and it was associated with a toad.⁴⁸

It was in the distribution of the toxins that the quality of Bassett's knowledge is better appreciated. Sarah Bassett had given Beck very strict instructions about the method of delivery generally, and the dosage: "...giving her the said Beck a very Strict Charge to put one of the Doses in ye Slates of the Outlett of the said Kitchin and the Other in their Vituals, and threat'ned [sic] her ye sd Beck (who is her Grandaughter) that the sd Readish Coulour Dose was to poyson her sd Mistress Sarah Foster, and as that wasted away so her sd Mistress would waste away, and if her Mistress did smell on't twould poyson her... And ffurthermore she ye sd Sarah Bassett gave to ye sd Beck (her Grandaughter) aforesd, another Dose of Poyson of ye Colour of Cut tobaco, which she Order'd Beck to poyson a Negro Girl Called Nancey belonging to ye sd Thomas Foster, and altho' the said Nancey did not take it, she finding it in the wall of ye Outlet of ye sd Kitchin, Yet by only Looking on it she ye sd Nancey was poison'd...".⁴⁹

The first was certainly an inhalant- "...and if her mistress smell on't would poyson her...". The inhalant for Sarah Foster was to work with the ingested poison, the latter, as stated, probably containing either adrenaline or bufotenine (and muscle relaxant). It was also clear that the poisoning was meant to be

progressive, phased over a long time to give the impression of a gradually debilitating disease or sickness. It was to suggest, that is, the progressive deterioration Mrs. Foster, among others: "... as that [the toxin] wasted away So her sd Mistress would waste away...". Moreover, this description, combined with the description of the immediate effect on Nancey, provides some grounds for arguing that Nancey's dosage was higher; that it was increased to ensure Nancey was immediately incapacitated.

It would dovetail well with the idea that Bassett had, to her later detriment, conceived of the distribution of poison in a fashion that would not endanger Beck. It is obvious that the administration of poison in the fashion stated in the indictment- that is, as inhalants- would potentially kill Beck as easily as the others. Strict instructions were thus given, plausibly to ensure that the right people were killed. Both Beck and Nancey as slaves would have frequented the kitchen more so than the Fosters. Indeed, the kitchen was the principal work-place for female slaves, in some houses virtually adjacent to their quarters. Placing a plausibly high dosage of poison in the kitchen (scheduled for immediate effect), which could be disposed of once it poisoned, and located in a place where Beck would know not to go, might explain the immediacy of the toxic reaction on Nancey. By extension, the poison with the longer-releasing dosage was placed elsewhere, virtually left to the discretion of Beck who knew her mistress' habits and the habits of the rest of the household. This was clear from the indictment itself.⁵⁰

It must be reiterated that Bassett's attack might have been successful had it not been for the investigation of Affey and Mrs. Minott. Without that investigation, there was the possibility that Thomas Foster, Sarah Foster and

Nancey, and not Sarah Bassett, would have been dead by June of 1730. This was probably a point not lost on the court. Indeed, the tenacity of Sarah Foster in wishing to see Bassett successfully prosecuted (taking her appearance at court as evidence of this) may reflect that this point was not lost on her either.

The second issue, with regards to motive, takes one to certain biographical issues, particularly her relations with the victims and other people, and her personal characteristics and proficiencies. One would in vain seek this information from witness testimonies. On the other hand, it becomes clear through reading the witness list that the bulk of the first ten and the whole of the final four lived and worked in Southampton-Sandys. They could logically have been asked to give evidence of that aspect of the 'circumstantial' which constituted her relevant personal history. Yet their testimony that she masterminded and ordered the delivery of poisons was virtually unrecorded in the court documents. Clues, however, to what these 'character witnesses' might have said do arise from the context of Sally Bassett's life: from as early as the 1650s.

One of these clues concerns her age. It has been stated that Sarah Bassett was an old woman, an elderly 'mulatto'. That she was elderly was Cyril Packwood's position, and certain circumstantial facts support him in this. Bassett, when evaluated by the court, was deemed to be worth £1-4-0.⁵¹ Ruth of Thomas Minott was noted, even before the investigations, to have been valued at £1-5-0, one shilling more than Bassett. Bassett's valuation was, thus, around the value placed on enslaved old women. Moll, for example, recorded in the wills as an 'old woman' belonging to Elizabeth Burrows, was valued in December 1731 at £3.⁵² One assumes that Nanny, a 'Negro woman' recorded in the inventory of Samuel

Conyars in July 1739, was also old. Her value was written at £1-4-06.⁵³ It would have been strange for an apparently relatively healthy woman as Bassett to have been given so low a value, except for reasons of old age. Her age is also suggested through Beck, her granddaughter, who was characterised as a woman at the time of the incident.⁵⁴ If one assumes that Beck was at the most eighteen, her birth would have been roughly in 1712 (ironically the year of Bassett's first engagement with the colonial courts). If Bassett's daughter were *at least* eighteen when she had given birth to Beck, that would put this daughter's birth at roughly 1694. Bassett could easily have thus been born in the 1650s, 1660s or 1670s.

This brings one to the first antagonism. The years between 1656 and 1670 saw, as had been noted, tremendous changes in the 'customs of the country' with regards to 'Negroes', 'Mulattos' and 'Indians'. It was discussed in the Introductory first chapter that from 1656 the number of rights enjoyed by people classed in these groups diminished swiftly. Proprietors used the conspiracy of 1656 as a pretext to remove the free status from 'Negroes', shunting them into a 'voluntary' servitude just ahead of enslavement. By 1669-1700, virtually all 'Negroes' and most 'Mulattos' and 'Indians' existed as what could be classed as 'perpetual servants'. This was the world that Sarah Bassett was born into as 'an elderly mulatto woman', one in which was exactly in the cusp of being a full-blooded slave society (with *all* 'Negroes', and *many* 'Mulattos' and 'Indians' as slaves) and an indentured servant society, with its numerous free 'Negroes', 'Mulattos', 'Mustees' and 'Indians'.

Could Sarah Bassett herself have been free during these transitional years? It is not insignificant, firstly, that Sarah Bassett was one of the few enslaved

women who had surname. The custom of *freed* people taking a surname as a reflection of their changed status was noted with James Sarnando, among others.⁵⁵ One intriguing possibility, as it relates to Sarah Bassett, is that she may have been linked to a 'mulatto' man named Thomas Bassett. There is, however, no direct evidence for this. Thomas Bassett had been owned by Christopher Burous [read: Burrows] and had been manumitted by him on June 3, 1674.⁵⁶ It is not clear what became of the man, but it is not implausible that another Bassett owned by a descendent of Christopher Burous was related to Thomas. This Bassett was a 'mulatto' girl recorded in the will of an eighteenth-century Christopher Burrows (1724).⁵⁷ She was simply listed as named Bassett: there is a suggestion that her first name was not recorded. Five years after 'Bassett's' appearance, a 'Free Negro' woman, Ruth Bassett, was presenting a petition concerning her children to the Governor's Council. This was about the time when Sarah Bassett was delivering poisons to her granddaughter Beck for distribution. If all of these Bassetts were related, as seems plausible, a picture emerges of some able to escape chattel slavery and others still caught up in its vicissitudes. More to the point, although Thomas Bassett enjoyed a free status, this freedom may not have been inherited by all of his descendants. This assumes, again, that Sarah Bassett and the 'mulatto' girl named Bassett were his descendants.

As a 'mulatto', born in the 1650s or 1660s, and with a last name, there was a strong possibility that Sarah Bassett was born free, or at least was the daughter of a free person. Even as a 'mulatto' (after 1662) she would have experienced directly the operation of, and environment created by, codes imperilling her freedom. Moreover, she would have felt the force of emerging codes and customs,

at a time when there was a feeling of antagonism to these traditions in certain quarters. This antagonism was most notably reflected in the failed attempt by 'Negro' Christians to stifle the application of the 'customs of the country' to themselves.

Nonetheless, Sarah Bassett was, by 1712, clearly owned by Southampton blacksmith Francis Dickinson. As his will of 1727 does not mention a wife, it is assumed that she had probably died by that year. It is difficult to imagine Bassett's life differing from that of average eighteenth-century Bermudian bondswomen, especially with regard to her tasks. The task of raising Dickinson's children would have fallen on Bassett. Though he had six by 1727, four were adults in that year: James, John, Thomas Dickinson and Mary Richardson. Two were still minors: Daniel and Sarah. Virtually all of Francis Dickinson's possessions were passed on to his children, particularly to his youngest two.⁵⁸

Although there is a mention of 'Negroes' (part of the property to be shared between Daniel and Sarah) no specific mention is made of Sarah Bassett. The assumption is that Sarah Bassett was to have been inherited along with the rest of the 'Negroes' passed on to, and divided between, Daniel and Sarah. The requirement that the two children were to wait until the age of responsibility (or marriage) to inherit them was stipulated. Significantly, with Francis Dickinson's death, control over his 'Negroes' was secured by the will's executors, his three male adult children John, Thomas, and James. While Bassett and the other slaves were to continue in their duties, the job of supervision went to these three men.⁵⁹ The notation in the court records that Sarah Bassett was owned by the late Francis

Dickinson leaves little doubt that the youngest children had not yet reached the condition of marriage or the age of ownership by 1730.

It is, finally, of passing significance that Thomas Foster, the Hog Bay proprietor of Beck, was the direct descendent of Governor Josias Foster. Governor Foster had given the pivotal order which sought the removal of 'Free Negroes' from the colony, the watershed regulation following the conspiracy of 1656. Sarah Bassett had, on one occasion, been classified as a 'Negro woman'. Classifying individuals so indifferently tended to occur in the early 1700s when their parents were placed in different racial classifications. It would fit well for Bassett if her father were the 'mulatto' Thomas Bassett and her mother a 'Negro' woman'; and it would have also provided another explanation why Sarah Bassett would not have enjoyed this putative father's manumitted status. The daughter might have by inherited the condition of her mother.

One important aspect of her biography is the connection of Bassett to witchcraft, hinted at by tradition. To what extent was this a correct view of her? Lefroy drew attention to the method of her execution: immolation.⁶⁰ This was one technique by which witches were destroyed and Bassett, in this sense, would have been the last person burned as a witch. Significantly, the other convicted poison plotters were punished differently. Pitt was quoted regarding these punishments. Only Bassett was burned to death.

Much later, in 1755, Judy was convicted of attempting to poison John and Ester Harvey. She sent to three different popular places in Bermuda and lashed 39, 20 and 25 times respectively. She was then to wear a halter around her neck to complicate her sleeping, imprisoned and then transported as an alternative to

continued imprisonment. Yet Judy was not burned to death.⁶¹ Given the tendency to confuse 'obyism' with witchcraft (as Marsden had done) it might be suggested that Bassett's involvement in this practice caused her to be popularly known as a 'witch'. This may explain why she would be among those investigated in the month preceding her execution.

One also suspects that two of the four witnesses providing 'circumstantial facts' (Benjamin and Samuel Dickinson of Southampton) were providing evidence of this. The bulk of the first group of witnesses, living in the area were also in a position to support the view that Bassett had the skills to carry out acts 'witchcraft'. It probably only needed two or four to make the point legally. Samuel Dickinson listed as witness was very plausibly the son of John Dickinson, the owner of 'Indian Tom'. Samuel Dickinson, recorded in John's will, had inherited some of John Dickinson's slaves when the elder Dickinson died in 1713.⁶² Information about Bassett's activities would easily have been known to persons inheriting these slaves.

But the association between Sarah Bassett and a man who spoke French and interacted with French privateers, might invite one to speculate that Bassett had access to Saint-Domingue voodooism through 'Indian Tom'. This view is based in part on his ability to consort with French privateers, and he might, further, have had an opportunity to learn any poisoning techniques possessed by bondservants in that (and any other) French Caribbean colony. He, at least, forms a bridge between Sally Bassett and the French Caribbean, if not necessarily between Bassett and Saint-Domingue; and, as noted, the skills and items listed in the trial of Bassett parallel the types of items described by E. Wade Davis. It is

more than a coincidence that 'a white toad substance', for example, should make its appearance in both the trial accounts and the Davis' discussion of Haitian *voudou*. If Tom also possessed these skills, an explanation would arise as to why Tom was expelled without much protest from Samuel or any other of John Dickinson's heirs.

There is, finally, one important set of circumstances providing a motive for Bassett's plot, and it takes the discussion back to the conflict between Sarah Bassett and John Jennings. The story of Sarah Bassett, in the introductory vignette, mentioned this mysterious conflict between Justice of the Peace John Jennings and a younger Sarah Bassett. The result of this conflict was the punishment from the Court of the Justices of the Peace: 'three lashes every thirty paces from one end of Southampton to the other'. It was another way of suggesting that she be beaten the length of the Tribe. She could not have counted on either the fatigue of the constables or their compassion to conspire to lessen the number of blows. Sarah Bassett would have plausibly suffered the unmitigated force of the intended chastisement. But the beating was only one implication of the conflict between Bassett and Jennings. The other was the loss of a friend (or even relative) in the person of Tom the 'Indian', exiled from Bermuda.

Crucially, this incident between Jennings and Bassett links Sarah Bassett to Sarah Foster in an unexpected way. Sarah Foster (as Sarah Jennings Foster) was the daughter of Justice of the Peace John Jennings, the man who had made the painful events of 1712 possible for Bassett.⁶³ One might suggest that it hardly improved matters to have her granddaughter Beck in the service of the Foster family.

The Court of Assizes convicting Bassett of 'petit treason' may have appreciated the role of these latent unresolved tensions in constructing their picture of a motive for Bassett's attack. One of the four witnesses supporting Beck's evidence was Jane Paynter. She was added to the first group of ten, and sworn after they had been. Yet her evidence before the grand jury was enough to 'promote' her to the final group of witnesses. This is significant as her husband was Stephen Painter [read: Paynter]. Jane Painter was one who could necessarily provide evidence of this earlier conflict.

Thus, within the context of events occurring between John Jennings and Sally Bassett, it would be plausible to assume that the woman who visited Beck in the capacity of her grandmother had some deep personal feelings against the Fosters. There were certainly possibilities of clashes between Beck and the Forsters: the type of conflicts expected within the asymmetrical relationship of proprietor and slave.

Yet, the virtue of all of these working theories is that they give Sarah Bassett circumstantial reasons to resent and carry out murderous acts against Thomas and Sarah Foster, no less aggravated by the fact that they had become the owner of her granddaughter Beck. A foundation of hatred would have been cobbled together by a series of customs, Executive Orders and disappointed expectations on which Thomas and Sarah Foster probably added more resentments. But, as they lay at their Hog Bay home in Sandys, their limbs stiffening and their lungs gasping for air, they may never have appreciated the extent to which the acts of their ancestors ripened in their bodies and the body of

their slave girl Nancey: how much, that is, they constituted their fate, and the fates of others.

One final issue that serves as an epilogue to this case study: the fate of Sally Bassett's granddaughter Beck. The court, probably for economic and political reasons, chose to select an old woman as opposed to the young one for juridical punishment. Yet it was Beck who placed the poison in the kitchen vent, in the food, and in the areas frequented by Sarah Foster. It was also Beck who, beyond the evidence of personal ill-will between Sarah Bassett and Sarah Foster, lived with the Fosters every day and would have had to deal with the vagaries of slavery as dealt out by them. It was, finally, Beck who would have been in a position to have had murderous intentions towards Nancey. Indeed, with these considerations, Beck may have been more intimately involved in the plot than the trial's suggestion of her passivity.

But if the court was willing to spare her life at the price of her testimony, it is doubtful that the Fosters would have continued to live in the same house of one who brought them so close to death. It was probably the opinion of the Court of Assizes that Thomas Foster would rid himself of his slave without public expense. Thus, not unexpectedly, in Foster's will of 1731, Beck was not listed among the property distributed.⁶⁴ It is accepted that wills do not list all of an individual's property, especially all of his or her slaves. Nonetheless, Beck's absence dovetails well with the opinion that Foster, a mariner, sold and transported Beck out of the colony; and that Beck was one of those Pitt boasted had been banished to the Spanish West Indies.

Epilogue

It was in 1730 that the House of Assembly, the Executive Council, and Whitehall approved several laws toward 'repairing' what had been expressed as excesses in servile behaviour. The first called for the removal of 'Free Blacks' in the spirit of seventeenth-century legislation. The full title of the law reflected clearly its purpose and terms: the *Act for Extirpating All Free Negroes, Indians, Mulattoes, such as have been Slaves (and Freed or to be Freed) so as They do not Remain in These Islands Above the Space of Six Months After Such Freedom or No Longer Time Here Than the said Space of Six Months After the Publication hereof for Those Already Fixed*.⁶⁵

One of the victims of this law was a woman named Ruth, referred to as a 'Free mollatta' in the bills of sale documents recording her purchase. She and her son Israel were both sold at a public auction to William Tucker for £5.5.⁶⁶ The question arises as to whether those constituting the 'large numbers' of 'blacks' leaving the colony in the 1730s composed in some large proportion free 'blacks'. There is also the question of whether the law was rigorously enforced. Indeed, in the year Ruth was sold at the public auction, another Ruth, Ruth Bassett, was having her children released from the care of another Tucker of Warwick, Robert Tucker, a mariner. The Governor's Council had to have known about her, as her case was presented before it for adjudication.⁶⁷

Again, accepted *prima facie*, the fate of the two families suggests a phenomenon associated with the execution of the law: the arbitrariness of its

enforcement. This was discussed earlier in reference to the seventeenth-century laws expelling 'Free Negroes': the 'Sword of Damocles', to paraphrase Cyril Packwood, hanging over the heads of free 'blacks'. This may have been the contingency operating for Ruth Bassett, assuming that she was not subsequently expelled after the adjudication of her case.

The second piece of legislation was two-fold. Called the *Act of the Further and Better Regulating Negroes and other Slaves; and for the More Effectual and speedy Way of Prosecuting Them in Criminal Causes*, its first provision sought to place regulations on trading, particularly overseas trading, by enslaved merchant-sailors. It was introduced above. As Grand Juries had complained about the clothing of bondservants (in essence, part of the 'profits' they derived from their trading) these, too, were legislated against. Only certain types of slaves were to be given the privilege to wear 'fine clothing', according to the Act: "That from and after Publication hereof, all Masters or other Owners... of any slave in these Islands shall find them sufficient Food and Clothing; and that no Master or other Owner... of any Slave in these Islands (his Excellency the Governor for the Time being only accepted) do or shall, upon any Pretence whatsoever give Liberty, or suffer any of them to wear any Silk, Lace, Ribbons, Rings, Bracelets, Buckles, nor any Sticks, Whips or clubs (except them that are decrepid or lame...) nor other Ornaments."⁶⁸ The problem for proprietors was that it removed from the arsenal of power the incentives used by them to reward their bondservants for acquiescent behaviour. Thus, not unexpectedly, proprietors continued to allow bondservants to wear these items. Some Justices of the Peace, in deference to the more powerful proprietors, continued to pretend that they did not notice bondservants dressed in

the fashion that defied the law. Again, without a strong policing structure and consistent proprietor enforcement, the law could not be consistently applied.

The second provision concerned the trial and prosecution of accused slaves. A list was detailed by the legislation of what acts were deemed worthy of special judicial attention: "...that secret and barbarous Way of murdering by Poison..." for one, as well as other attempts to kill, burglaries, rapes, 'highway robberies', the burning down of proprietors homes, and the stealing, maiming or killing of their livestock. The legislation, thus, listed the variety of methods bondservants used in resistance against proprietors: methods previously called acts of 'insolence'.⁶⁹ Legislators characterised bondservants as "...brutish Slaves..." whom "... for the baseness of their Condition..." did not deserve the dignity of a trial by twelve man jury: it "...neither truly can be rightly done as Subjects of England are...". Thus, all 'Negroes', 'mulattos', and 'Indians' living in the colony saw, *de facto* if not *de jure*, the removal of a right they had to a small extent enjoyed.

What replaced the jury trial was, as stated above, a court constituted by three Justices of the Peace and four freeholders selected by them. This group had the power to convict accused bondservants capitally, unifying in one body the functions of judge and jury.⁷⁰ The Act of Assembly was to run until 1733, but in the subsequent year, an additional clause was added to the Act. This new clause complained that "...the Impudence of Negroes and Slaves of late has been such, as to stab, strike, and threaten several White Persons...". Thus those accused were to be tried, again, by a body men composed of Justices of the Peace and freeholders with the right to sentence to death those convicted.⁷¹

The final noteworthy Act of Assembly concerned 'whites' who killed slaves. Legislators noted in the preamble that protections against arbitrary violence against the person, as part of the British constitution, did not anticipate the question of American slavery: "... here, in his Majesty's Colonies...", the preamble read, "the Cases and Things are wonderfully altered; for the very kindred, nay sometimes even the Parents of those unfortunate Creatures (upon the Coast of Africa) expose their Issue to perpetual Bondage and Slavery, by selling them unto your Majesty's Subjects trading there and from thence are brought to these and other of your Majesty's Settlements in *America*, and consequently purchased by the Inhabitants thereof...".⁷² [italics in text]

Thus, if they were freeborn in Africa, they emerged in the Americas, and particularly in Bermuda, as otherwise. For this, as well as "... for the Brutishness of Their Nature...", they were thought of as slaves "...no otherwise valued or esteemed amongst us than as our Goods and Chattels, or other personal Estates...". They thus did not deserve the fullness of the protection as ordained by "... the strict Laws of England...".

The 'custom of the country' required a law governing slaves that conceived of them as chattel and personal estates, not as English subjects. Thus, the Assembly mentioned innovations from Barbados and North America which, in keeping with the customs of those countries, removed penalties against 'whites' who accidentally killed a bondservant. Therefore, "...from and after the Publication hereof... if any Person or Persons whatsoever within these Islands, being Owner... of any *Negroes, Indians, Mulattoes* or other slaves, shall, in deserved Correction or Punishment of his, her, or their Slave or Slaves for Crimes

or Offences by them committed, or supposed to be committed, accidentally happened to kill any such Slave or Slaves, that then the aforesaid Owner or Possessor shall no be liable to any Imprisonment, Arraignment, or Prosecution, nor subject to any Penalty or Forfeiture whatsoever."*[italics in text]*⁷³

Also protected were 'whites' who, as they arrested bond ervants committing a felony or burglary at night, 'accidentally' killed the bondservant in the resulting struggle. The 'white' discharging his duty would be absolved from any penalty. There was an exception to this coverage: not protected were those 'whites' who flagrantly and maliciously killed slaves, whether they owned the slaves or not. Murderous proprietors paid the King's treasury a mere £10 fine for killing a slave. Any 'white' killing someone else's slave paid that amount plus any further damages of compensation to the inconvenienced owner. It is, however, an unwarranted assumption that suggests that any court would have been in a position to charge a proprietor for murdering his or her own slave.

But what is more significant is that the *Act for the Security of the Subject*, as the other two passed that year, shaped the culture of slave-proprietor politics long after it fell into desuetude- which, for the *Act of Security*, occurred in 1789.⁷⁴ Roughly twenty-six years after its termination, Mary Prince would recall how Captain John Ingham nearly beat to death the 'French Black' enslaved woman Hetty in broad daylight, and in spite of her clearly apparent pregnancy. Forced into a premature delivery, Hetty's child was delivered stillborn; and her proprietors continued to beat the stricken woman afterwards. Hetty eventually died. Whatever John and Mary Ingham thought about the legal consequences of their acts, the slaves who tended Hetty felt it was better for her to die than, presumably, to

continue to live under this treatment. But it never crossed their minds that Hetty could expect legal redress or legal protection. Prince assumed that Hetty's fate would become her fate: "...I cried very much for her death. The manner of it filled me with horror. I could not bear to think about it; yet it was always present to my mind for many a day."⁷⁵

Conclusion

The poisoning methods of Bermuda's poisoning plots had their sources in West African medical techniques. They were, it has been argued, the application of West African and 'Gold Coast' innovations to the politics of resistance in Bermuda. Instruments of healing became instruments of conflict.

Moreover, the poisoning attacks occurring before 1730 were violent events undertaken to resolve personal differences between individual proprietors and individual bondservants. But those engaging in this violence were not revolutionaries: they were not seeking the overthrow Bermuda's colonial government; they did not use it to end British imperial rule in the islands. It would not be until 1761 that poisoning constituted any part of a revolutionary scheme. This chapter sought to merely outline the early introduction, nature, and employment of these sophisticated methods of murder and violence into local resistance. An examination of, among other things, the revolutionary use of poison will be undertaken in the next chapter.

Endnotes: Chapter V

- ¹ *Early Bermuda Wills, 1629-1835, Summarized and Indexed: a genealogical reference book*, edited by C.F.E. Hollis-Hallett (Bermuda: Juniper Hill Press, 1993), p. 157.
- ² BW 1718-1733, vol. 6, p. 137.
- ³ *Courts of the Justices of the Peace*, pp. 467-73.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 467-73.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 467-73.
- ⁶ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, p. 633; Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 148.
- ⁷ CO 37 12, p. 77.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- ¹¹ AZ 102-6, 1726-35, p. 37.
- ¹² Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic roots of classical civilization; the fabrication of ancient Greece, 1785-1985* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1987), p. 9.
- ¹³ AZ 102-9, 1755-1764, p. 37.
- ¹⁴ EXCO 1722-34, p. 166.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 161.
- ¹⁷ *Statute Law of Bermuda, 1620-1952*, p. x.
- ¹⁸ EXCO 1722-34, p. 166.
- ¹⁹ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 146; EXCO 1722-34, p. 166.
- ²⁰ CO 37 12, pp. 81-2.
- ²¹ *Acts of the House of Assembly, 1690 to 1723*, p. 57.
- ²² CO 37 6.
- ²³ AZ 102-6, 1726-35, p. 223; *Early Bermuda Wills, 1629-1835*, p. 399; BW 1718-33, vol. 6, p. 152.
- ²⁴ *Early Bermuda Wills*, p. 399; see also BW 1695-1700, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 57.
- ²⁵ BW 1695-1700, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 62.
- ²⁶ BW 1718-1733, vol. 6, p. 152.
- ²⁷ Nancey of George Ball (recorded April 24, 1723) and Nan of Mathew Witter (June 28, 1723) respectively; see *ibid.*, pp. 149, 157.
- ²⁸ EXCO 1722-1734, pp. 187-8.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-8.
- ³⁰ *Acts of Assembly to 1736*, p. 97.
- ³¹ Freeman, *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman*, pp. 287-8; Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Laws*, p. 55.
- ³² Stewart, *1000 African Names*, p. 147.
- ³³ EXCO, 1722-1734, pp. 187-8.
- ³⁴ Freeman, *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman*, pp. 287; Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Laws*, p. 55.
- ³⁵ AZ 102-6, 1726-35, p. 221.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 222.
- ³⁷ Moore Darrell had sat on the Court of the Justices of the Peace in 1721, which had attempted to ascertain the revolutionary implications behind the encounter between Martha Stoaks and the bondservant Coffey.
- ³⁸ *Acts of Assembly 1690-1723*, pp. 12-3.
- ³⁹ AZ 102-6, 1726-35, p. 222.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 224.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.
- ⁴² CO 37 12, p. 81.
- ⁴³ AZ 102-6, 1726-35, *passim*.
- ⁴⁴ William Zuill, *Bermuda Journey: a leisurely guide book* (Hamilton, Bermuda: Bermuda Bookstores, 1946, 1974), p. 132; Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 148.
- ⁴⁵ Zuill, *Bermuda Journey*, p. 133.
- ⁴⁶ AZ 102-6, 1726-35, pp. 221-2.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁴⁸ AZ 102-6 1726-35, p. 222.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 222.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 220-1.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 224.

⁵² BW 1718-33, vol. 6, p. 275.

⁵³ BW 1734-44, vol. 7, p. 96.

⁵⁴ "Beck a Negro woman of the said Thomas Foster..."; see AZ 102 6, p. 221.

⁵⁵ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 4.

⁵⁶ *A Calendar of Early Bermuda Records*, p. 685.

⁵⁷ BW 1718-33, v. 6, p. 99. She was to be passed on to Burrow's granddaughter Ann Wentworth (May 22, 1724).

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 136-7.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 136-7.

⁶⁰ *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, p. 633. Lefroy wrote: "The very curious case of Sarah Bassett... although popularly referred to that category [of a witch trial] was really a case of *petit treason*, and her trial and sentence are perfectly regular in form." This, it can be contended, is a very strict interpretation of the court trial. Other evidence allows one to draw conclusions about the unstated reasons for her execution, that takes one beyond it as merely a case of *petit treason*.

⁶¹ AZ 102-9, 1755-64, pp. 19-20.

⁶² BW 1707-13, v. 4, p. 61.

⁶³ I wish to thank Mrs. C.F.E. Hollis-Hallett and Dr. A.C. Hollis-Hallett for confirming the linkage between Sarah Foster and John Jennings. See also BW v. 12(2), p. 12.

⁶⁴ BW 1734-44, v. 7, p. 71.

⁶⁵ *Statute Law of Bermuda, 1620-1952*, p. x.

⁶⁶ *Bills, Bonds and Protests, 1739-1766*, vol. 9, p. 194.

⁶⁷ EXCO 1722-1734, pp. 175-7.

⁶⁸ *Acts of Assembly to 1736*, p. 95.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 96.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 96.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 101.

⁷² Ibid., p. 98.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 98.

⁷⁴ *Statute Law of Bermuda, 1620-1952*, p. x.

⁷⁵ Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, p. 57.

The tree of of Liberty is Watered with the blood of tyrants and patriots;
It is its natural manure.

Thomas Jefferson.

Chapter VI

The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Resistance: 1761-4

Prologue: 'There would be a great Victory gained here soon'

On September 12, 1761, a free 'Negro' woman named Rachel Fubler submitted a petition to the Governor's Council. According to the petition, Fubler had been freed through a deed of manumission by her then deceased former owner Elizabeth Burgess. It further noted that Sandys parish resident, Captain Edward Seymour, ignored this deed of manumission and was claiming his ownership of her. Seymour had further kidnapped her two children, Jonny and Lilly Fubler, and was holding them in lieu of her eventual re-enslavement. "Wherefore Your Petitioner," her document concluded, "humbly Prays your Excell:^y and Honors to take her Case into Consideration and to redress her in such a manner as shall seem meet to your Excellency and Honors, by preventing the said Edward Seymour Carrying into Execution such his illegal, unwarrantable, and vile practices in depriving one of His Majesty's Subjects of that Most valuable blessing on Earth, her Liberty."¹

The deed of manumission clearly had been certified and accepted by Governor William Popple in July 1759; and this certification was submitted to the Governor's Council as evidence of the illegality of Seymour's actions. The Council [read: Popple] proceeded with an investigation of the case, and ordered Seymour to appear before the board: in the interim, however, Seymour was to "...not disturb Rachel Fubler or her two children..."² But an event one month later interrupted the examination of Rachel Fubler's case.

John Vickers Jr., a mariner and resident of Smith's parish, had reported to the Justice of the Peace that he had overheard, on the evening of October 12, some 'Negroes' talking about an impending insurrection.³ Vickers was told to appear before the Governor's Council, which he did on October 15; and he was armed with a deposition that was to have a profound effect on the 'ease of mind' of the local elite. Rachel Fubler's attempt through the law to resolve her conflict with Edward Seymour had suddenly been relegated to the periphery of the government's business.

John Vickers never recorded much of what he saw: it was, according to his deposition, 8:00 p.m., and by then all but a barely illuminating afterglow lingered in the autumn evening. While in the deposition it was declared that as he passed near the Taylor residence, he "...saw several Negroe Men, and as best remembers to the number of about six or eight...", what follows is filled with what he heard. Vickers thus heard "...one of the said Negro men, and so he believes was a Negro Man late the property of Mr. Thomas Cox, and commonly called Natt..." declare that he possessed a cow, and that "...no white Body should have any of it...". He was to have uttered an imprecation against all 'whites', declaring that he "...hoped to have a frolick with it": "... that would be his part and his wife's [in it] ...", he is recorded to have concluded. 'Part in what' was insinuated.⁴

Vickers heard another voice from the group threaten the first 'white Body' that took anything from him: "...[they] should kill him or he would kill them." 'Indeed', declared another voice out of the night "...there would be a very great Victory gained hear [sic] soon, or if not, one half or two thirds of the Negroes will

be hanged in Bermuda."⁵ Vickers recalled that on the morning of the very same day a 'Negro man' named Peter, a pilot owned by Smiths resident Margaret Spencer, declared that "... if any White Body shou'd take any cloths from him he would know the reason of it and *be* avenged."⁶ Margaret was the wife of another recently deceased Smiths inhabitant, Captain Nicholas Spencer. It did not seem, following the deposition, that Peter was among the group Vickers had heard that Monday night.⁷ Vickers finally identified, as part of the group meeting that evening, George, a 'Negro man' owned by a fellow Smiths Tribe resident John Spencer.

Vickers was apparently not alone the night he heard these men talking boldly amongst themselves. Although he was leaving the house of his mother Mary, and going to where he was living (the house of his father-in-law), he was accompanied by Mary's slave: a 'Negro woman' named Frank. Vickers invoked her name as a support for his declaration in the deposition.⁸ It is difficult to know why Frank would have been leaving her home, or for that matter accompanying Vickers to his. The temptation is strong to suggest that Frank had overheard these men earlier and reported them to Vickers; and Vickers proceeded to 'discover' the shadows of a revolutionary design. There is, however, no strong evidence to support this idea. What is clear is that Frank provided a supporting role in the legal strength for the prosecution of those allegedly involved with the conspiracy.

These two depositions, the Vickers deposition and the Fubler deposition, had one significant similarity. Both detail the actions of 'Negroes' against the implications of the 'customs of the country'. But there was also one major

distinction between them. The statements and actions of Fubler, recorded in the deposition presented on her behalf, were attempts to use the legal system and its apparatus to affirm a right within the 'customs of the country': the right of a 'Negro' woman and her 'Negro' children to have their legally-granted freedom respected. The statements recorded by Vickers, in contrast, spoke of the revolutionary designs of a shadowy group of 'Negroes' (half or two thirds of them) which *challenged* the 'customs of the country' and *disregarded* the legal system: if freedom was to be granted to them, it would be granted though their actions, and in spite of (if not at the expense of) the law.

What will emerge in this chapter are two anatomies: an anatomy of a revolutionary conspiracy; and an anatomy of the government's reaction to it. The colonial regime's reaction brought about the fall of a revolution and the end of a period of violent and revolutionary resistance in Bermuda. But it also forged the context for the period of 'radical' resistance. This examination describes the Conspiracy of 1761, an event that stood to influence, paradoxically, the future of Rachel Fubler on the one hand, and the future of Bermuda's free 'Negroes' and free 'Mulattos' on the other.

An Anatomy of a Revolutionary Conspiracy: 1761-2

Inspirations

On January 20, 1758, the authorities in Saint-Domingue burned to death the African revolutionary leader Jean Makandal. His immolation brought to an end an insurgency movement which had begun in 1757; and its relevance to Bermuda may lie in two important issues: its proximity in time and place to the Bermuda Conspiracy of 1761, and its similarity to it. There is a strong case to be made that the Makandal revolt served as an inspiration for the conspiracy in Bermuda. Some discussion concerning it may help to support this proposition.

Makandal's broader movement, beyond the revolt itself, began in the 1740s, when he escaped into the mountainous hinterland of Saint-Domingue. He was born in 'Guinea', possibly in the 1730s, and at the age of twelve suffered the tragedies of capture and enslavement, the results of a war fought against his country. He was sold to European slave traders, finally ending up on a large Saint-Domingue sugar plantation in the North.⁹

Regarding Makandal's youth in Africa, Carolyn Fick wrote: "...he possessed a remarkably inquisitive mind and, introduced to the arts, displayed a keen interest in music, painting, and sculpture, while having acquired a considerable knowledge of tropical medicine, despite his young age."¹⁰ Fick added that Makandal was "...supposedly brought up in the Moslem religion and apparently had an excellent command of Arabic."¹¹ She speculated that he was born in Angola, noting that his name was phonetically close to that of an important

city there called Ma Kanda; and she reflected on the argument of Moreau de Saint-Méry: that there were Mohammedan ideas among the Congolese.

As she noted, some documents about him state he was from 'Guinea'. But this was a term usually reserved for the countries far to the north, from Senegambia to the Bight of Benin. Moreover, it is known that during the mid-1700s, the armies of the Asante Confederation had campaigned successfully against the northern countries of the 'Gold Coast'. Many of these essentially savannah territories contained large numbers of Muslims. Notable among the group of conquered Muslims were Hausas.¹² This environment would thus have fitted with a Muslim Makandal who spoke Arabic, yet knew tropical medical techniques and innovations.

It is significant that his education mirrors that of Abd Rhaman Ibrahima, a Fulbe who, in the late 1700s, was also captured in war and sold to the Europeans. Ibrahima would eventually end up in the United States, and when discovered by a North American client of his father, freed. He returned to Africa through, notably, the good offices of John Quincy Adams.¹³ Ibrahima had studied at several Muslim schools as a teenager, including one at the famed Songhai city of Djenné. Thus, he was likely, at a young age, to have been exposed to an education similar to that of Makandal. "He is very familiar with the Koran," wrote one contemporary of Ibrahima, "many passages of which he read for me with correctness and fluency...[and he] read and wrote Arabick for me by the hour."¹⁴ It would seem plausible for a Muslim in general and a Hausa especially to have been exposed to the combination of skills reflected in part by Ibrahima, and on the whole by Makandal.

This is a point of particular importance when it is recalled that a Hausa derivation was speculated for the name Mingo.¹⁵ This name has occurred and re-occurred several times in this discussion, and it is significantly the name of one of the accused conspirators of Bermuda's 1761 servile revolt. Although the life history of the Bermuda Mingo is no way as accessible as those of Makandal and Ibrahima, these painfully few clues may provide important cross-references between their lives. If it follows that Mingo was a 'Gold Coast' Hausa, either originating, as many other Hausa Muslims did, in any one of the coastal states, the possibility of similarity in life experiences and abilities emerges.

Nonetheless, one is on firmer ground in linking an inspirational relationship between the insurgency Makandal participated in and the conspiracy which involved Mingo. Concerning its development, Cap François was to be the site of the Makandal revolution: the water of the houses of the 'whites' was to be poisoned, thereby destroying a portion of them. Then, armed and organised contingents under Makandal's command were to attack with force-of-arms 'white' counter-resistance in a bid to "...massacre the whites."¹⁶

The use of poison in the Makandal revolt is one element of particular notice. Makandal was proficient in tropical medicine and, within a 'Gold Coast' context, his conversion of it to poison would have followed. But what is of interest as well is the training he seems to have provided his insurgents: an education on the use of poison that would have begun from the time of his escape in the 1740s. Fick even quoted one contemporary document as declaring that Makandal had established a school in a guerrilla outpost to train people in the method.¹⁷ It is possible that Bermudian merchant sailors (particularly those like 'Indian Tom'

with access to French privateers) could have availed themselves in some way of this education; and although the poison plots in Bermuda predated Makandal by several years, it is plausible that others transmitted this knowledge to some among Bermuda's enslaved sailors. This was a theory floated earlier in connection with the relationship between 'Indian Tom' and Sarah Bassett.

An argument for a linkage between the 'black' merchant-mariners of Bermuda and Makandal is further strengthened by the second notable element of the Saint-Domingue insurgency: the organisation of the class of *pacotilleurs*. *Pacotille* is a French word translating in English 'shoddy good': it refers to the inexpensive wares sold by travelling traders to slaves on the plantation. The *pacotilleurs* Makandal deployed were often slaves, similar to the 'wharf Negroes' and 'higglers' in other colonies. The French group as such constituted the Francophone link in the Caribbean trading web of the enslaved: a web which, of course, included Bermudian enslaved merchants and enslaved sailors.¹⁸ Since *pacotilleurs* made many contacts through trading, they were perfect for use by Makandal to pass along tangible and intangible revolutionary tools and resources: as purveyors of goods and information they were the packhorses in his revolutionary design. Fick quoted a complaint from the essay "Makandal, histoire véritable":

'...among those *pacotilleurs*... Makandal's disciples and most trusted partisans were to be found, and, above all, it was they whom he used for the good or evil that he wished to accomplish.'¹⁹

It would thus be plausible that inspirational links, at the very least, were made between the *pacotilleurs* of Saint-Domingue, and the enslaved sailors of Bermuda: that even if the tangibles of revolutionary resources failed to travel

along the trading network between them, the intangibles of the revolt (the news of its development, methodology and goals) more than likely did.

It is this point that leads to a final similarity: the racist goals attributed to each, albeit by respective colonial antagonists. Virtually every Bermuda document about the Conspiracy of 1761 mentions the plan 'to massacre all of the whites' and to subvert the colonial government. This went beyond the albeit singular reference offered by Coffey of the 'Negro' plans in 1721. Makandal was quoted, in Saint-Domingue, to have taken three scarves, one black, one yellow and one white, and stated: "'This [the yellow scarf] represents the original inhabitants of Saint-Domingue. They were yellow... These [pulling out the white scarf] are the present inhabitants. Here, finally, are those who will remain masters of the island; it is the black scarf.'"²⁰

Thus, both in similarity of means and as contemporaries of each other, two conspiracies emerge within the 'Northern Antilles Triangle'. Links were possible between the two movements, particularly in light of the observations concerning the dense trading relations of merchant and enslaved sailors. That it constituted an intangible product of this trade is plausible- a fact of no small importance when it is clear that merchant mariners were present among the conspirators of 1761. A strong but circumstantial case emerges to support an inspirational linkage between the two movements.

Motivations

The group overheard by John Vickers represented the 'Greek chorus' behind the drama of revolt, articulating the frustrations and expectations of those who did not participate in it. The six to eight people who were talking the night of October 12 were complaining about the political state of the colony, and lending their verbal support to an inchoate, widely spreading conspiracy. Specifically, the motivations for the group meeting grew out of a general dissatisfaction with laws passed by the Assembly. These laws had a direct impact on their 'surpluses'.

Ten months before, in December 1760, the House of Assembly began the process of re-working legislation concerning slaves. These were given the sobriquet 'Negro Laws' in one Journal of the Assembly sessional paper document.²¹ But all were to re-codify and improve many restrictions already existing.²²

Yet the day before this discussion in the Assembly, two other bills were introduced which also threatened the 'secret' 'surpluses' of some bondservants. One of these became law in June 1761 as the *Act to Prevent the Exportation as well of Neat Cattle, Sheep, and Hogs, as of Poultry of all Sorts Except Ducks*. This was described earlier and, although it was characterised as an attempt to weaken the commercial trading engaged in by slaves, it must also be seen as a war-related measure: an attempt to end what was alleged to have been "...a great Scarcity... in these Islands to the great distress of the Inhabitants...". Nonetheless, from July 1, 1761, it became illegal for any one to place on board and sell overseas cattle, sheep, hogs, or any type of poultry with the exception of ducks. Passengers and ship captains were given an 'allowance' of the amount of this livestock they could

take away. This was to be negotiated with the authorities, based on their assessment of the personal, "...sufficient..." needs of the applicant. Yet should a constable under the warrant of a suspicious Justice of the Peace discover any of these animals on board (beyond the stated allowance), the beasts were to be confiscated. They were then judged to be forfeited by the Justice of the Peace, and sold by the constables at a public auction. There was the lash for the 'Negro or other slave' attempting to export, without government sanction, the restricted animals; and the animals in question would have been confiscated and auctioned off.²³

This was also about the same time that Attorney-General John Slater introduced the 'Bill for Lessening the High and Exorbitant Wages For the Negroes, as well as to Prevent their being Taught the Mechanic Arts'.²⁴ Francis Jones would announce its failure in committee to the full House of Assembly, and the reasons for its failure were discussed previously.²⁵ No member of the Assembly made an attempt to save it or re-introduce it. Notably, like the *Act to Prevent Exportation of Cattle*, it was the type of legislation that also placed restrictions on many 'whites' as well. It was, thus, likely to be a generally criticised piece of legislation.

But an idea of what the 'blacks', probably thought of these laws can be determined from the discussion recorded in the Vickers deposition. Indeed several features about the articulators of these expressions, as well as others accused of participation in the Conspiracy of 1761, can be outlined. These features provide other revealing points about the motivations behind the conspiracy. It is useful thus, to examine those 'blacks' alleged to have been involved in the conspiracy.

Dramatis personae: the 'disaffected Negroes'

It was generally believed that the Bermuda Conspiracy of 1761 involved large numbers of 'Negroes'- a general revolt from within the servile and 'Negro' population. 'Almost general' was the scope Governor William Popple gave to it in his letter to the Lords of Trade and Plantations in February 1762.²⁶ The source of this opinion might have been the individual in the Vickers deposition who declared that half or two thirds of the 'Negroes' would be hanged. However, important trial records are apparently not in the Bermuda Archives;²⁷ nor had they been sent to Britain, as far as can be determined. Thus, only a dozen or so individuals whose names, by chance, emerge in a broad collection of records, can systematically be examined. The search for, and analysis of, the conspirators of 1761 must therefore begin with them:

Table 22.-- List of Accused Conspirators and their Owners

<i>Name</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Owner</i>	<i>Note on Owner</i>
Peter	Negro	Male	Margaret Spencer	Smiths/widow of N. Spencer, mariner
George	Negro	Male	John Spencer	Smiths
Natt	Negro	Male	[the Cox children]	of Thomas Cox, Devon. shipwright
Nancy	Negro	Female	Jonathan Tucker	Sandys/merchant
Ben	Negro	Male	Elisha Pruden	Southampton
Peter	Negro	Male	Edward Parker	Warwick/shipwright
Mingo	Negro	Male	Richard Jennings	Southampton/gent.
Juan	Negro	Male	Joseph Pruden	Southampton/ship carpenter
Tom Cooper	Negro	Male	William Cooper	St. George's/mariner
Charles Cuff	Negro	Male	John Paynter	Hamilton/mariner
Oby	unknown	unknown	unknown	N/A
Nanny	unknown	unknown	unknown	N/A
Jack Dare	Negro	Male	unknown	N/A

Sources: AZ 1755-64, p. 86; BW 1744-77, v. 8, pp. 362-3; BW 12 (2), pp. 4-5; EXCO 1746-65, pp. 393-6, 347-8, and 411-2; *Early Bermuda Wills, 1629-1835: summarized and indexed, a genealogical reference book*, compiled by C.F.E. Hollis-Hallett (Hamilton, Bermuda: Juniper Hill Press, 1993), pp. 432, 466-7; William Frith Williams, *An Historical and Statistical Account of the Bermudas from their Discovery to the Present Time* (London: Thomas Cautley Newby, 1848), p. 77.

Taking the group above, four analytical divisions can be made: the three men named in the Vickers deposition, particularly Natt and the pilot Peter; Oby and Nanny (from the Governor's Council minutes); the other two pilots, Tom Cooper and Charles Cuff; and the rest of the group found in other documentation. Again, without the forensic documentation from the trials, it is extremely difficult to determine with certainty how much of an overlap exists between 'the rest' and the six or eight men of the Vickers deposition. Therefore, one must be agnostic about whether those in the 'deposition group' (outside of Natt and George) were involved. George's involvement can be dismissed early, if only because he never appears again in any other record.

Yet, the best place to begin is at the periphery: with those who *may* not have had any part in the Conspiracy of 1761. This takes one to those eight or so men Vickers overheard; and one can begin with the most vocal member of the group: the bondsman called Natt.

Nat (or Natt) was roughly twenty-five years of age when he appeared in the Vickers deposition. He was recorded as a young man of Devonshire Tribe owned by shipwright Thomas Cox. Cox had obtained him in May 1742, after the death of William Cox. Nat was then about five years old and it is plausible that as a child, he was 'bred up' as a shipwright, the occupation of both William and Thomas Cox.²⁸

He seems to have spent much of his early childhood among a large number of children, one or two of whom were probably related to him. One young 'Negro' boy named Wan [read: Juan] (valued at £11) is of particular interest beyond the

probability that his name implies a Spanish heritage. The two were placed together in the inventory which, in this particular document, may have been the result of a need to list relatives together. Others were also listed in this fashion.²⁹ There is no evidence that this Wan was the same Juan listed in the group of conspirators, and this would be, in fact, extremely doubtful: Juan of Joseph Pruden may have been much older than Natt; and Wan and Natt were both listed as 'Negro' boys in William Cox's inventory.

Significantly the probate documents of William Cox, Sr., compiled on August 23, 1711, listed several people plausibly inherited by William Cox, Jr.: Sarah a 'Negro girl' who became Sary a 'Negro woman' in the 1742 inventory; and Sue a 'Negro girl' who became Sue a 'Negro woman' in the 1742 inventory.³⁰ The inventory of William Cox, Sr. (1711) listed Kate as a 'Negro' woman; whereas the 1742 inventory listed a 'Negro' girl named Kate. It is plausible, given the customs of name inheritance described in a previous chapter, that this was a daughter inheriting her mother's name. Also listed in William Cox, Sr.'s inventory was a 'Negro' boy called Whan. By that same logic, it is possible that the Whan listed in the 1711 inventory was the father of the boy Wan listed in William Cox, Jr.'s 1742 inventory. Virtually a generation separated the two 'Negro' boys. The Whan of the 1711 inventory, listed as valued at £18-00-00, may have been a teenager.

If Nat and Wan were siblings, it is equally possible that both were the *sons* of Whan. The Whan of 1711 would have been in his sixties by 1762, fitting well with the two inventories and the value given to Juan the conspirator that year. An

interesting and plausible genealogical link between two accused conspirators emerges, following this hypothesis:

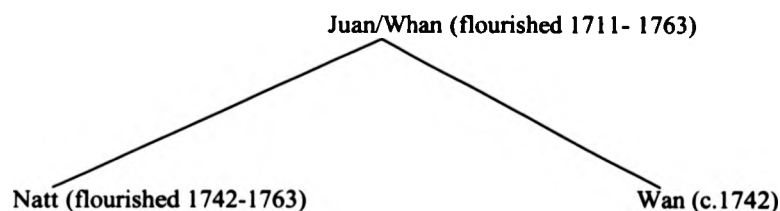


Figure 2.-- The Possible Genealogy of Two Accused Conspirators

It is tempting to argue that Juan, the bondsman of Joseph Pruden, was once owned as a child by the Cox family during the early years of the 1700s; that he was then obtained by the Pruden family, preferably by Joseph Pruden; and that he, the bondsman of Joseph Pruden, was the father of Thomas Cox's bondsman, Nat. Father and son, by this theory, would have been connected (if not each totally involved) in a revolutionary conspiracy. It is worth noting that the proprietors Joseph Pruden (owner of Juan), William Cox, Jr. (owner of Natt and Wan), and Thomas Cox (the final owner of Natt) had similar occupations within the maritime industry: Pruden was a ship's carpenter, and the Coxes, shipwrights.³¹ They would have picked slaves with those woodworking skills connected to this industry. Certainly, a blood connection between Natt and Juan would explain why it was easy to associate Natt with the conspiracy, particularly if Juan had been involved in it.

Yet, outside of a possible relation to Juan, the only other adult male that would have been present in Natt's life was Jack. Jack was written in the list as not appearing to the inventory enumerators in 1742. Notably, this virtually always occurred when a slave was at sea at the time the inventory was compiled.³² It would imply that Jack was an enslaved mariner, a man providing Natt with some contact with the maritime world. But as a child, with or without Jack, an association with the maritime industry through Natt's occupation allowed him to mix and meet a variety of enslaved mariners. Natt may also have been a mariner himself.

These associations provided an opportunity for him to trade with men who bought and sold goods (and exchanged ideas) along the international trading system. These contacts he should have been maintained throughout his life. As a child and young adult, Natt would have been immersed within the world of the 'maritime revolution' as the slave of shipwrights and as possibly a shipwright himself. It, again, put him in the way of the tangibles, and most importantly, intangibles, bought and sold by Bermuda's bond and free mariner class.

Thomas Cox, who had owned Natt for most of the 'Negro' shipwright's life, died sometime between 1759 and 1761. Natt found himself under the management of the executors of Cox's will, William Morris, Captain James Harvey and Captain Joseph Dill.³³ Their purpose, as stipulated by Thomas Cox, was to ensure that Natt was employed and that the income generated from his labour be put toward "...the Education and for the support and maintenance of [Cox's] five children...".³⁴ Moreover, both Dill and Harvey sat on the House of Assembly between 1759 and 1761; and it may have been a shrewd move by Cox

to have placed himself in the position of having these two men among his executors.³⁵ This point is clear when it is realised that both men were the House of Assembly representatives the year John Slater's ill-fated 'Negro Artisan Bill' died in committee. Thus, if the men stalled the artisan bill, they did not prevent the Act which problematised the 'secret' income of Nat. As an enslaved shipwright, or enslaved participant in the maritime economy who had contacts with enslaved sailors, he plausibly anticipated renewed difficulties through the *Act to Prevent the Exportation of Neat Cattle, etc.....* Moreover, a more distant threat arose concerning a re-codification and enforcement of the 1730 'Negro Regulation Laws', whose lapse he had clearly exploited to obtain for himself or his family a cow. Both bodies of legislation particularly threatened 'Negro' rights over livestock 'property', undermining his profitable disposal of it in the fashion of the 'Wharf Negroes' in other colonies: he would not have been able to sell his cow to departing slave sailors, or transport the animal out of the colony himself. It is not surprising that he would rail against *any* action by the government [read: 'whites'] depriving him of his livestock.

But if the laws alone fed the motive for his fiery expressions, the question still lingers concerning his involvement in the Conspiracy of 1761. The intensity of his words reflected the extent of his disgust that clearly brought to the surface feelings of irritation concerning 'whites' in general. Yet no evidence in the extant records supports the view that he was involved; and it is possible that he was not. His expressions about the revolt and his intentions regarding it were too ostensible and open. Vickers heard him clearly, and one can assume that any other passer-by could have done so as well.

Indeed, the behaviour of those who were meeting with Nat does not fit into the context of a revolt characterised by its secrecy. One is told before and after the 'discovery' (as will be discussed below) of how this secrecy made it difficult for the authorities to act against it. So 'secret' and 'long concerted' it was that the Vickers deposition was the only means to legally justify and initiate government action against it.³⁶ It is doubtful that persons able to keep a secret for so long before and after October 12, effectively frustrating the widespread prosecution of conspirators, would have so rashly and openly expressed themselves in the way that Natt and his interlocutors did. What his 'confession' might better admit to, given the evidence, is of a youthful and unguarded rage against a re-codification and enforcement of political disabilities.

The importance of Peter, the other individual named in the deposition, lies in his occupation: as a pilot/mariner he was part of the international maritime trade. He would have had a special problem with at least one of the three 1760 body of laws. Peter's proprietor, Smith's mariner Captain Nicholas Spencer, died in 1757. Captain Spencer was inventoried as owning fifteen men, women, and children. Peter, due to his occupation and potential involvement in overseas maritime work, was valued at £50, the highest in the group.³⁷ Margaret Spencer obtained by will Peter and his skills, and owned fifteen slaves by the time of her death.³⁸ Yet Mrs. Spencer declared that Peter was essential to her economic support. The implication between her assertion and the number of slaves she owned was probably that she earned a more than sufficient income through the appropriation of their wages: that she lived on the wages of the bulk of her fifteen

slaves, Peter included. He seems, nonetheless, to have accumulated some surpluses, and these may have been secret surpluses.

A revision of a 1730 law giving sloop captains wide-ranging powers (and inducements) to confiscate slave sailor property would explain his statements in the Vickers deposition: 'that if any white took his clothing he would know the [real] reason and be avenged'. It had been noted that the Act gave sloop captains the opportunity to hide their covetousness and greed behind the desire to enforce the law. It was also implied, in the case of Bess, how slave sailors could be victimised by selective diligence. Sloop-captain confiscation of bondsmen's goods may not have been a problem while Captain Spencer was alive and while Peter was employed on his ships. Inducements were, as noted, given by owners to their enslaved-mariners. The situation would have changed drastically if Peter were employed on a different vessel, with a new captain, in the difficult years of a wartime economy. His comments fit well within this context.

What is significant about Natt and about Peter, again, is that both articulated clearly three important ideas. These ideas were identified as the 'intangible' resources enslaved sailors obtained through their involvement in international maritime trading: their right to ownership; the right to have this ownership respected; and the belief that they should support, in some undisclosed way, those who used revolutionary means to protect these ownership rights. The international maritime network had produced, indirectly, local challenges to the 'customs of the country'. But Nat and Peter were, with George, men accused of, though not involved in, the Conspiracy of 1761: they spoke for the conspirators, articulating at the expense of their safety, those irritations that made revolution a

desired option. It is useful to turn to those who can more strongly be argued as involved in the Conspiracy of 1761.

Two pilots, along with Peter, were accused as conspirators: Charles Cuff and Tom Cooper. Peter may have articulated clearly their reasons for revolution, but there are some other aspects that add new dimensions to the possible motivations of these two men.

Both Cuff and Cooper were described by their proprietors as excellent pilots and a danger to the colony should they leave it. It was felt that both were capable of leading in French naval forces and privateers. While William Cooper added this toward the end of his petition to Popple concerning Tom, John Paynter made this the most prominent consideration concerning Cuff. Paynter added: "... [Cuff] is an excellent Pilot and perfectly acquainted with every Passage about these Islands...".³⁹ It seems that those seeking out pilots for the revolt selected from among the most proficient in that class.

Beyond this, the involvement of mariners in this conspiracy underscored what the 'Greek chorus' in the Vickers deposition alluded to, and what has been contextualised above: the revolutionary incompatibility of a local slave society (with its occasional expulsion of 'Free Negroes' and 'Free Mulattos' and state-mandated public and private expropriation policies) and the growing 'wealth', contacts and confidence of 'black' international traders.

There is also a secondary, more contextual, but not unimportant feature about Cuff and Cooper. Both men, along with the mariner Jack Dare, possessed last names. This is no small detail when a particular social tradition prevailing in Bermuda is recalled: the tradition of acquiring a family name on gaining freedom.

Virtually all 'Free Negroes' and 'Free Mulattos' who have been encountered in this discussion had family names: James Sarnando, William Force, John Force, Hannah Bestania, Ruth Bassett, and Rachel Fubler.

There is no suggestion here that any one of these three men- Tom Cooper, Charles Cuff or Jack Dare- was free and somehow forced into slavery; or that any one was pretending a freedom which he did not possess. It is clear that all three were enslaved. Indeed, there were some slaves who had family names, one notable being Sarah Bassett. Some may have used family names which were not recorded in the official documentation: there is an interesting example of this from the inventory of John Jennings, in which there is a 'Negro' woman listed as named 'Warringham'.⁴⁰ What is important, however, is that while a few slaves might have had last names/family names or at least few were recorded with them, virtually every free 'Negro' and free 'Mulatto' had one and was recorded with it. The acquisition of freedom and the possession of a surname were linked, and bondservants using them may have been expressing aspirations of freedom. This may explain why proprietors were reticent to refer to their slaves having surnames by their surnames: a fear that it would add confidence to their aspirations of freedom. Herbert Gutman noted that South Carolina proprietors forbade 'blacks' from using family names. Indeed, as Gutman pointed out, such restrictions went far to explain why the proprietors there did not know the surnames of those who used them.⁴¹

But, it can be said that in Bermuda (alongside resource accumulation by bondservants), some bondsmen among the sailing community were also taking on the trappings of freedom: the family name. Some of those, moreover, found

themselves among the group engaged in revolutionary resistance. The acquisition of resources from the perquisites of the maritime economy, and the involvement in an elite occupation within the servile caste, fit well with the acquisition of this 'trapping of freedom', especially as the possibility of freedom was often frustrated by legislators.

The surname of Charles Cuff is further notable as it is phonetically close to the 'Gold Coast' weekday name given to a child born on Friday: *Cuff* → *Cuff[ey]* → *Kwof[fi]* → *Kwoffi*. The phoneme 'wo' closely reproduces the 'u.' Abbreviations of 'Gold Coast' names occasionally appear in the records: Quash, the name of the man who murdered his proprietor John McNeil is a prominent example (*Quash* → *Quash[i]* → *Kwasi/Kwesi*).⁴² With 'Gold Coast' connections, Cuff's occupation as a pilot fits. It was stated that some African pilot merchants became victims of the voracious appetite of the Euro-American slave trade.⁴³ It is tempting to speculate that Charles Cuff was one of its victims who, upon arrival in the Americas, took his day name as his surname and retained his connection to Africa. But it is also possible that Cuff was the name of a 'Gold Coast' parent which he used as a patronymic and family name. Several Bermudian enslaved children did this: Mary Prince, the most prominent example. Her father was named Prince.

Nonetheless, whether Cuff inherited his surname or was given it by 'Gold Coast' parents in Africa as a day name, one is still plausibly confronted with an individual of 'Gold Coast' connections and heritage: one who was, moreover, involved in a major revolutionary conspiracy. Thus, he joins, in this conspiracy, two others with 'Gold Coast' connections: Oby and Mingo. These 'Gold Coast' associations to a major conspiracy in Bermuda arose within an international

context that contained the Jamaican servile revolt of 1760, a revolt which was dominated by 'Gold Coast' Akans (possibly Fantis).

The plot itself seems to have been initiated in Southampton Tribe. This was the opinion of some members of the Governor's Council who declared that it was "...generally believed that the late conspiracy and Rebellion of the Slaves...was first proposed in said Parish...".⁴⁴ This was written in March 1762, when much more of the conspiracy was known by the authorities; and this revelation itself was part of a larger desire to increase the policing capabilities in that Tribe. A new and additional Justice of the Peace, Captain Richard Jennings, was thus appointed.⁴⁵ But one small point about this western Tribe must be noted before more of the accused conspirators are re-introduced.

Southampton parish shares a border with two parishes of no small importance in the history of conspiracies. To its east was Warwick, the location where revolutionary resistance first entered the politics of servile resistance. One hundred and five years before the last Bermudian servile conspiracy, over a dozen bondsmen there planned not only to overthrow the government but to massacre the 'English'. To the west of Southampton lay Sandys Tribe, the place where Sarah Bassett's intentions against the Fosters and their slave Nancy were executed. Southampton, of course, was the place where these intentions were developed, if not born. Yet the whole area itself, the Warwick-Southampton-Sandys Tribe combination, produced prominent conspiracy movements, whether toward revolution or toward poisoning plots with personal objectives. Significantly, both poisoning and revolution would become synthesised into the Conspiracy of 1761.

One is left with a distinct suspicion that in this region, revolutions and poison plot campaigns were more likely to have developed; and this was not a coincidence ignored by those desiring an additional Justice of the Peace for Southampton.

It is notable, therefore, how many among the group of accused originated from these three Tribes, and from Southampton in particular:

Table 23.— List of Accused Conspirators from the Western Tribes/Parishes

<i>Name</i>	<i>Owner</i>	<i>Tribe/Parish</i>
Mingo	Capt. Richard Jennings	Southampton
Peter	Edward Parker	Warwick
Juan	Joseph Pruden	Southampton
Ben	Elisha Pruden	Southampton
Nancy	Jonathan Tucker	Sandys

Sources: AZ 1755-64, p. 86; *Early Bermuda Wills, 1629-1835: summarized and indexed, a genealogical reference book*, compiled by C.F.E. Hollis-Hallett (Hamilton, Bermuda: Juniper Hill Press, 1993), pp. 466-7; William Frith Williams, *An Historical and Statistical Account of the Bermudas from their Discovery to the Present Time* (London: Thomas Cautley Newby, 1848), p. 77.

One of these men, Mingo, was very possibly alive and in Bermuda during the poisoning plots. Mingo, as noted above, was owned by Richard Jennings, the son of the Justice of the Peace and the former Speaker of the House of Assembly John Jennings. Mingo had, in fact, been the property of John Jennings before the Speaker's death in 1742.⁴⁶ He was then, presumably, bequeathed to Richard. He remained in Richard Jennings's service for most of their lives. Obviously, this is not an insignificant point. It would have meant that if Mingo was in Bermuda during the 1720s to 1730s, he was familiar with the conflicts and controversies

that surrounded the poisoning plots, and in particular was familiar with one of its principal protagonists, Sarah Bassett.

He might have been about eighteen years old at the time of these events. Mingo was listed in the 1742 inventory of John Jennings' slaves as worth £35.⁴⁷ A list of the 'King's Slaves' compiled in 1738 noted a thirty year old 'Negro' man named Manual as worth £35.⁴⁸ This seems to be the value of a bondsman 'at his prime', and thus from it can be deduced that Mingo was roughly about thirty at the time of John Jennings' death. It would also mean that Mingo, born presumably in 1712, was approaching fifty when he was arrested and accused of conspiracy in 1761.

Out of the sixteen bondservants listed in John Jennings inventory, two have been identified as plausibly Africans. One was a 'Negro' man possibly about Mingo's age named Goree (valued at £35), a name suggestive of Senegambian connections. The other 'African' was Ecodgio [read: (E)Kúdjo = 'Monday'], identified earlier as of 'Gold Coast' heritage, who was a teenager at the time of John Jennings' death in 1742.⁴⁹ It would seem that a community of Africans, including some 'Gold Coast' Africans, existed in Southampton, at least within the immediate environs of the Jennings family. It is significant that within this area lived Sarah Bassett, with her poisoning innovations. Equally, it is significant that within this area, a revolutionary plot involving the use of poison should arise, and involve not a few people with 'Gold Coast' connections.

The idea also emerges that Mingo was in some broad way aware of discussions about the poisoning attack on Sarah Jennings Foster: the daughter of his first owner and the sister of his second. He may even have known Sarah

Bassett. That he would have known, or at least have known of, Sarah Jennings Foster is highly likely. That he would have known, or at least have known of, Sarah Basset, is no less so. Sarah Bassett, as was noted, lived and practised her skills in Southampton, and was all too familiar with the Jennings family—following the line of reasoning advocated in a previous chapter. Mingo, moreover, growing up in what seems to have been the hub of poison plotting (and revolutionary conspiracies), would have been familiar with the effectiveness of poison. It was a weapon of choice among those planning secret and disguised killings of proprietors.

What is of importance is the connection of Mingo to a conspiracy which deployed poison, in an area in Bermuda of one of the more notorious and proficient practitioners in the method. There is more than enough in that association to make the inspirational link between Bassett and her plot, and Mingo and his revolutionary conspiracy.

Finally, Mingo was the bondsman of the influential Richard Jennings. Jennings, late in 1761, was, like his father, elected to the House of Assembly; and Mingo would have had access, through Jennings, to information and debates about legislation.⁵⁰ Mingo was in a position to know important details about conflicts of the socio-political elite: those battles between Assemblymen and between the Assembly and the executive, which often took very public forms. Such intelligence was important in determining the timing and degree of success of any potential revolt. Mingo was a man with the apparent means, motive and opportunity to manage, if not lead, a conspiratorial revolution.

This access to the 'mind' of the colonial government, through the unguarded discourses of its members, was also enjoyed by Peter, the alleged leader of the revolt. Edward Parker, the owner of Peter, represented Warwick Tribe in the House of Assembly. Parker was qualified to sit in the House from December 17, 1760, and he was part of the debates on the 'Negro Artisan Bill' and the *Act to Prevent the Exportation of Neat Cattle*.⁵¹

More clearly, of the five bondservants suggested here to have been intimately involved in the conspiracy, two were owned by Assemblymen. Indeed, taking the list of conspirators altogether, three of them were in some way connected to Assembly members: Natt (through James Harvey and Joseph Dill),⁵² Peter (through Edward Parker), and Mingo (through Richard Jennings). Nonetheless, with regards to the three participants, it is significant that some of the accused conspirators would be so well placed to control the timing and the method of the revolt; yet, with no data available, this point cannot be pursued more deeply.

Finally, while Peter was presented as linked to the conspiracy, it is important to note that there have existed some doubts about his involvement. William Frith Williams pointed out that the evidence against Peter was slight and that Peter protested his innocence.⁵³ Williams might have taken this view from the trial records which, in 1848, might still have been available; and given the proximity of Williams' generation to those involved in the reaction to the revolt, his opinion might have been derived from oral tradition. Nonetheless, there was enough evidence to at least place Peter at the periphery of the conspiracy, and to convict him capitally. But, unlike Natt, no 'admission statement' emerged which might suggest that his conviction arose on other bases.

The Conspiracy of 1761

There were two major parts of the conspiracy as far as can be discovered. The first has been alluded to above, at various places, and it concerned the deployment of poison. It was poison, as William Frith Williams noted, that aroused the suspicions of the proprietors, and warned them that a servile rebellion was underway, long before the 'confirming' event of October 12, 1761. Much later, on March 11, 1762, the House of Assembly sent a petition to Governor Pople complaining that "...very many slaves, who are generally suspected to be poisoners... are so secret in their wicked designs that there cannot be found Evidence full enough for a Court who are tied up by the Rules of the Law to convict such slaves."⁵⁴ The character of these 'wicked designs' was explained in the *Act for the Regulation of Negroes, etc. Bond and Free* (1764), which spoke of poison plotters masquerading their designs as administrations of medicine. Two suspected poisoners were identified and expelled, and significantly one was called Oby.⁵⁵ That this is less a personal name than a job title/proficiency is clear if it is identified with *obayifo/obi/obeah*. It is plausible that both Oby and Nanny were *abayifo*.

The appearance of *abayifo* is notable for another reason, and this can be highlighted by digressing to the Antiguan Conspiracy (1736-38). During that revolt, *abayifo* emerged not as the administrators of poison but as the administrators of oaths. Oath-taking was a widespread political tool along the 'Gold Coast', deployed for the purposes of binding agreement. It was used, that is, for ensuring the unified execution of decisions. Generally, as Gaspar had noted, the institutions deployed in that revolt were 'Akan-based'.⁵⁶ Takey (or Court)

[read: Taki], the leader, was identified by Gaspar as a Coromantee. The rest of the leadership was composed of creoles.⁵⁷ "While imperceptible to whites," wrote Gaspar, "traditional Akan practices co-operated in the organisation of the slave plot, and we have an interpretation of collective slave rebellion that takes into serious account the cultural background of the Africans involved."⁵⁸

One indeed feels quite justified in arguing, giving the integral nature of the oath to 'Gold Coast' political action, that wherever 'Gold Coast' populations are involved in military activity, the oath would be part of this activity. Regarding the mechanics of the oath in the Antiguan revolt, Michael Craton wrote:

The oaths, administered in at least seven different places, were sealed with a draft of rum mixed with grave dirt and cocks' blood, and included pledges to kill all whites, to follow the leaders without question, to stand by each other, and to observe secrecy on pain of death. In some cases the oath was made with the hand on a live cockerel, and in one case the leader Secundi 'called to his Assistance, a Negro *Obiaman*, or Wizard, who acted his Part before a great number of slaves.'⁵⁹

The jurists investigating the Antiguan conspiracy had employed a language virtually paralleling, as will be seen, statements made by officials during the Bermuda Conspiracy of 1761: "...the Discovery [of the revolt] was wonderful, but not more so than the Concealment for so long a time, of a Plot, wherein it afterwards appeared such Numbers were concerned; the latter we remark, as an extraordinary Proof of the fidelity of Slaves to each other, and of the contrary to their Masters."⁶⁰ It would have been better for them to have credited the 'Gold Coast' oath, performed in front of them, though without their awareness of its purposes. As was implied, the oaths were apparently quite effective in diminishing defection; and Craton noted the tendency of those, not brought under an oath, to betray the rest.⁶¹

Finally, the institution of the oath unified the revolutionary action regardless of the place of birth of the rebels using it: it was, that is, a tool accepted as legitimate by Africans and creoles. On this point Craton conceded.⁶² Gaspar added:

The participation of the Creoles... according to Akan principles, perhaps explains why among the ten main ringleaders of the plot... Court was a Coromantee, while eight were Creole and one was either a Creole or had arrived in Antigua as a child.⁶³

Gaspar and Craton implied that among some of the Creoles there was respect for 'Gold Coast' traditions.

It should not be surprising if *abayifo* and oaths inserted themselves into the Bermuda Conspiracy of 1761. The silence which so long surrounded the Bermuda Conspiracy was probably the result of an oath administered by the identified *obayifo* (Oby) among the accused. Nonetheless, Oby and Nanny were accused of performing the other task associated with 'obeahmen'- the deployment of poison- and it all ties up well with what has been stated about Mingo.

The other important aspect in the Conspiracy of 1761 was the involvement of an invading French privateer force, also alluded to above. Discussions on the conspiracy, contemporary and modern, complained about it and the 'depredations' committed by French privateers. These attacks had occurred in the summer of 1761. Some affirmed boldly that the conspiracy and the privateer attacks were connected in some shadowy way.

Concerns about French designs on Bermuda arose at a meeting of the Governor's Council in 1756, when it had been reported that "...a native of France had been on this Island for some months past, that he was an Expert seaman &

understood navigation...". As the Seven Years' War was just beginning, it was ordered that he be detained quickly.⁶⁴ The Council's fears seemed to have been justified, for a note on French intentions was submitted to the Governor's Council in 1758. William Wingood, who would become House of Assembly representative for Smiths parish in January 1761,⁶⁵ presented a letter he had received from St. Eustatius: it was "...acquainting him of some Designs of the French on these Islands & that it wou'd be necessary to be ...[on] Guard."⁶⁶ The correspondent in St. Eustatius had apparently been "... in Company with some French Gentlemen..." at some undisclosed point in time. Apparently, these Frenchmen presumed that the eavesdropper did not understand them "... and in Difcourse", wrote the correspondent to Wingood, "...said to one another that there were Privateers fitting out of Cape Francois to come to attack Bermuda."⁶⁷

More direct intentions of the French would emerge in 1762. The legislature, in a joint address to Governor Popple in March of that year, informed him that five privateers were fitting out in "...Hispaniola...": the legislators appeared to believe that these simply sought to sail about the islands attacking shipping. But they added: "...should such Privateers meet with no Opposition it may encourage them to make a Descent on Us, which may be attended with Consequences, more fatal than we should have feared during the last Summer."⁶⁸ When Popple wrote his version to the Earl of Egremont, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, he gave more explicit details:

I have the Honour to transmit by this Opportunity an Address of the Council & Assembly of these Islands, setting forth their apprehensions of their danger not only from the behaviour of the French last Summer, by their Privateers cruising about these Islands & making several considerable Captures, but also for some Information which they have had from St Eustatius of a further design of the French in coming with a large number of Privateers with an Intention of making a Descent & joining our disaffected Negroes, who have been lately detected in a dangerous Conspiracy & intended Massacre of the white Inhabitants.⁶⁹

The source of both reports was probably a deposition given by Captain James Cox to the Governor's Council in March 1762, which declared that four French privateers had been fitting out for an attack on Bermuda.⁷⁰ According to his report, Cox had left St. Eustatius five weeks before, around the first week of February 1762: "... it then was a general Report there," Cox continued, "that four French Privateers were fitting out at the Island of Hispaniola, and intended to cruise round these Islands and that it was also there reported and believed that the Slaves here were to rise as soon as those Privateers should appear off here."⁷¹ Yet whether the French, hearing about the servile conspiracy by early 1762, subsequently sought to exploit the situation by then joining the 'disaffected Negroes' is not clear from the data. It is noteworthy that the discussions of a French invasion in 1758 did not mention a union with 'disaffected Negroes'; and one might argue that French privateering during the summer of 1761 was not explicitly connected to the burgeoning conspiracy.

But it can be offered with hostilities high between bond and free in Bermuda, local conspirators still had as an element in their planning French involvement. Indeed the Cox deposition itself, stating that "... the Slaves were to rise as soon as these privateers should appear off here...", seems to suggest a more co-ordinated plan, with hints of expectation on each side. It suggests something

more than an *ad hoc* and sudden exploitation of a Bermudian social conflict by the French. Moreover, the presence of pilots and sailors among the accused of the conspiracy (Jack Dare, Charles Cuff, Tom Cooper, and even Peter of Margaret Spencer), alongside these French intentions, makes it plausible that French involvement was factored somewhere in the plan. Pilots would have been needed to bring French privateersmen through Bermuda's barrier reef system. One might thus postulate that the French appearance off the coast was to signal the beginning of the armed combat portion of the revolt: armed combat that would assist poison on one side and the French on the other. This was suggested by Cox. The pilots would therefore serve to bring in French assistance if it were needed, supplementing an otherwise local revolution.

Thus, a general picture of the basic structure of the conspiracy emerges. There was the plan for an armed uprising as a subsidiary feature of the revolt: "Fears increased daily," wrote Popple, "... the Country was in general Alarm, & thought themselves unsecure. Our common Laws were inefficient for the present Exigency, throats every night were expected to be cut."⁷² Yet the principal vehicle of attack was poison. This was declared at a joint meeting of the legislators within a week after Vickers deposition was presented to the Council: "[A] most bloody intended Massacre and Conspiracy of the Slaves of these Islands," they declared, "has been detected from the unextorted Informations and Confessions of several of the Conspirators now in Custody, which has been further Confirmed to us by a Practice of poisoning of His Majestys White Inhabitants of these Islands."⁷³ Cyril Packwood also hypothesised a two-prong approach of knife and poison:

Male and female slaves would attack and kill the owners, including, women and children while they slept. This would be done with any weapons or Kitchen Utensils at their disposal....Prior to this, Black experts, in the art of poisoning, would have carried out their part. They were charged with poisoning their masters' food and killing them. Poisons were to be left in various parts of the house so that with just one breath, the victims would fall deadly ill. On the chosen date, the slave uprising would take place, throughout the whole Island. The ultimate objective... was for Blacks to seize and take over Bermuda, entirely.⁷⁴

The documents make clear that the intentions behind the Conspiracy of 1761 was for 'Negro' insurgents, through poison, the blade, and foreign privateers, to destroy large numbers of the 'whites' and overthrow the imperial government in Bermuda. Both intentions were neatly summarised in the title of a law that governed the trial of conspirators. This law was called *An Act for the speedy tryal of Divers Slaves, & others charged with a Conspiracy and Rebellion as well as such other Crimes Intent to take Away the Lives of the White Inhabitants of These Islands, & to Overturn & Totally Subvert the Government Thereof*.⁷⁵

An Anatomy of the Reaction: The Fall of Revolutionary Resistance,
1761-4

Roughly four months and a week after Vickers presented what he had heard to the Council, Governor William Popple was writing another letter about the conspiracy and surrounding events to the Board of Trade and Plantations. After characterising the Conspiracy of 1761 as an attempt to kill off the 'whites' and "...take Pofsession of these Islands...", he detailed a report to Whitehall of the challenges which met the government's reaction to the revolt. One theme undergirded his description, unknown perhaps to him: the degree of difference between the response of his administration to the Conspiracy of 1761 and the response of his predecessor John Pitt to the poisoning episodes of the 1720s. The root of this difference lay in what can be characterised as Governor Popple's adherence to the 'universal': his attempt to prioritise, during his government's response to the revolt, the interests and moralities of the metropolitan government against the particular interests and mores of the colonial proprietor class. "He that considers a public measure only as it may affect [himself] and opposes it from that principle..." he had once told the legislators, "may be what the World calls a prudent Man, but he can never be a Lover of his country."⁷⁶ The first major theme influencing the response of his government to the conspiracy was a re-articulation of the tensions between the 'Prudent Man' and the perquisites of the Crown.

This met the second theme: the battle between the government and the conspirators. It was clear that even after October 16, 1761, there were attempts by the conspirators to salvage the rapidly decaying portions of their revolt.

Popple reported that the initial response to the Vickers deposition was for the Council to round up those accused. All of the six to eight people overheard by John Vickers and Frank were arrested within the first week. Among this group, the first arrested were George, Nat, and Peter (the pilot of Margaret Spencer); then followed the others in the Vickers deposition "...and...", according to Popple, "...on their Examination several others, who were likewise examined, & who informed against many more, in consequence of which these also were apprehended, imprisoned & examined."⁷⁷

A few administrative measures were also carried out. On October 17, 1761 the Speaker of the Assembly requested that Councilman George Forbes make a formal request to Popple for an embargo. The Assembly had apparently, as a body, intended to make this application; yet the news of the character and scope of the revolt spread throughout the community, and legislators scattered from St. George's to their homes in 'the country' to safeguard their families and property. Cornelius Hinson was left in town to ask Forbes to make the application.⁷⁸ Thus, Popple promptly ordered the second embargo of the year. It would remain in force until October 29, 1761: when Bermuda's merchant sailing community began complaining of the problems it was causing them.

Before the end of October, the government also issued a tripartite reward scheme, as it began to become clear from whom the best evidence would arise. Indeed, beyond the Vickers deposition, there was no one other than 'black' informants who could provide capitally convicting evidence under the existing rules, so successful had the campaign of secrecy been. Thus, a proclamation was promulgated: 'Free Negroes' who informed against any 'Negro' or 'Mulatto'

would be given a bounty of £25 currency; slaves would be manumitted for their capitally convicting testimony; and co-conspirators themselves who informed on their fellows before December 1, 1761 would be granted a full royal pardon.⁷⁹ Of course, as with John Pitt's measures in 1730, these attempts went far beyond the desire to 'out run' the conspiracy and prevent its fulfilment; they sought to return to the 'feeling of ease' the conspiracy and the measures to repress it were undermining.

This was particularly necessary for, as with the events of 1730, poisoning played a crucial role in the Conspiracy of 1761. Its secret and skilful deployment induced paranoia, gave a frightening significance to even the mildest illness symptoms, and threw proprietors in fear of those whom they depended on for a variety of the details of living. Behind every morsel eaten, water or wine drunk, or even room entered, lay the fear of death. As Pitt had realised years before, Popple needed dramatic and immediate action if the confidence in his government was to be maintained; and he needed some mechanism to remove from the population all of those involved and suspected of being involved. What was developed, in pursuit of the goal of expelling conspirators, became what is here called 'Popple's Purge', and its implications will be outlined as the discussion progresses. But the one primary overriding intention of the counter-revolutionary actions of the government was to remove the servile-conspiratorial 'Sword of Damocles' that threatened at any moment "...its bloody Execution."⁸⁰

The proprietors were, however, caught between the Scylla of servile revolution and the Charybdis of expanded metropolitan/gubernatorial power.

Indeed, they found themselves sinking into the jaws of Charybdis when, on December 2, they, with Popple, agreed to the installation of martial law. The governor suddenly had life and death powers over his legislators (as many were also members of the colonial militia, commanded as an army by the governor) and could indeed govern without them. Popple's lawyers had made it clear to them that the Assembly could not meet and legislate during a period of martial law, and Assemblymen were obliged to beg the governor to lift it and allow them to pass laws. Popple's Whiggish commitment to the metropolitan constitution- the 'ancient constitution'- was the factor that for a time worked in favour of their particular colonial interests.⁸¹

Nonetheless, when the 'Charybdis' aspect of the dilemma was looking terrible to the Assemblymen from the standpoint of October 21, 1761, a group of legislators from both branches descended on Bridge House. They met with Popple to discuss the principal issue of the Reaction: the trial of the large number of men and women already locked up in the prison. Popple, predictably, steered close to the law and the royal prerogative, forever suspicions of the intentions of the Assemblymen; and he took a strict approach to the question of the trial. Both Popple and the legislators agreed, especially after the Reward Proclamation, that the laws needed to convict all concerned were in some ways not sufficient: speed was desired as was scope. More than just a handful were needed to be capitally convicted to induce fear in the slaves and peace of mind in the proprietors.

This, however, seems to have been the only point of agreement. The legislators proceeded to inform him that a Bill was to be presented to him regarding the Assembly's role in the appointment of justices for the upcoming

trial. They were arguing for a court selected by the Assembly, and they did not wish to leave that important element to the control of Governor Popple.⁸² Popple's response was to remind them that he alone had the right "...with the Advice & Consent of the Council..." to constitute the Court for this or any case; and he then proceeded to read out his commission detailing this right: "I Cou'd not give way to their request," he wrote to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, "as a remedy had already been provided."⁸³ His attempt to involve the Governor's Council in the decision-making process was probably intended to divide his opposition: for even if all of the Assemblymen did not have a say in the protection of their property rights, all of the members of the Council would have.

But 'to have a say' and to influence the process in a more meaningful way were two different issues. The Assemblymen knew all too well that behind the terminological unity implied by phrases such as 'governor-in-council' and 'the Board decided', lay a governor who could execute his royal prerogative against the advice and against the interests of the colonial 'Prudent Man'. "Their fears," wrote the governor, "(for the Plot evr'y day by fresh takings up of Negroes growing more & and more to appearance) were too great to listen to reason; their Solicitations to a degree of earnestness violent."⁸⁴ Legislators, aware of the local disquiet about the government, merely painted a picture of social unrest: "...the Country (as the Negroes belong to the Inhabitants) wou'd think their Negroes unjustly try'd by Courts not appointed by Law [read: by the Assembly]..."⁸⁵ It would produce, warned the legislators, the type of local dissension that the conspirators were counting on: the type that had provided a fertile field for servile revolt in the first place.⁸⁶ Evidence of the nature of this dissension would arise in

March 1762. Cornelius Hinson alerted the Council that Francis Eve and Benjamin Watkins, who had purchased Oby and Nanny, were threatening violence against anyone who confiscated and expelled them, as they were 'their property'.⁸⁷

Nonetheless, Popple insisted on his sole right to constitute the court. The law that the Assemblymen had already decided to pass regardless (which they had debated amongst themselves and *ex camera*) was complained about by Popple. It was, he told the Lords of Trade and Plantations, "... neither considering my office as Governor, nor Duty, as a Servant to the Crown."⁸⁸

Regardless, a compromise emerged in which the whole legislature would appoint members of what became the 'Commissioners for the Tryal of Negroes and others supposed to be concerned in the Present Conspiracy' [the group hereafter called the 'Commissioners']. It also passed an Act which designed new rules for the trial of the conspirators. Popple accepted the Act and the Commission it created and regulated, only on the premise that the Act did not repeal earlier laws regulating the trial of 'Negroes'. The Imperial Will was not to be abrogated retrospectively.⁸⁹ Twenty-five men constituted this Commission, all from either the House of Assembly or the Governor's Council. It included the President of the Council, the Colonial Treasurer General Nathaniel Butterfield, and the Speaker of the House.⁹⁰ Captain Richard Jennings, the owner of one of the accused conspirators, was appointed to the Commission, though strangely he is not located in the Journal of Assembly minutes of the list. Captain Joseph Dill, the executor who had been responsible for managing the employment of another of the alleged conspirators, was also on the Commission. It may have looked unseemly, but it did not corrupt the imperial morality and, from Popple's perspective, it kept the

peace. It may have been the cornerstone of his sudden and temporary popularity among the Bermudian legislators.

Yet trials, even show trials designed, in Popple's words, "...to make Examples & strike a terror into the rest..."⁹¹ required evidence. As late as December the *omertà* installed (as is postulated here) by 'Gold Coast' oaths was still holding enough to make the hope convicting all of those involved with capital offences illusory. Indeed, the *omertà* held up in spite of the new strategies developed to encourage informers. "For my part," lamented Popple in an address to the legislature, "I rather apprehend from what information I have been able to get, that the small number against whom the sentence of Death from proofs of Law requires, may be awarded, will be too few to strike terror into the Bulk of the Negro's & will render them rather more cunning, more daring, & more desperate than they are."⁹²

This led to a division between two types of 'convicted': those 'convicted' on suspicion; and those judicially convicted, for whom some evidence could be offered to override possible objections. The typology allowed for both types to be removed one way or another from the colony; and, *a fortiori*, large numbers of bondsmen could be expelled, regardless whether they were truly involved or not. Those convicted on suspicion were banished with the threat of death should they return. This 'banishment' process formally began in December 1761, when a measure was passed by the Assembly allowing proprietors of accused bondservants to ship them away before trial. Aware that for many there could be no capital convictions, that the cost of imprisoning them was high as would have been the cost of trying them (with no 'satisfactory' result promised), and the need

to remove the threat wielded over the heads of the proprietors, the Bill was accepted, and many sent away. Thus Popple could write: "Several were try'd, some capitally convicted & executed, others against whom Suspensions only lay, by Application from their Owners, transported...".⁹³ It was a summary that exactly mirrored John Pitt's thirty years earlier. This group of accused, composed of those 'convicted on suspicion' was, after the main trial of the conspirators in April 1762, replaced by a new group of accused: a class composed of those 'convicted' on less than capital evidence. This group, too, would be ordered into exile, with execution awaiting any of its members who dared to return to the colony.

Nonetheless, it seems justifiable to argue that up until November 26, 1761, some key conspirators were still free and in a position to salvage the revolt. They had managed to dodge the widespread arrests. Indeed, the organisation of the revolt may have been such that two of the poisoners were able to return, albeit as the purchased property of the unwitting. They may have left the islands when the third embargo was lifted on November 13, installed through legislative application in November 5. Yet, in spite of the organisation and the alleged *omertà*, the second major setback was about to befall the conspiracy: this was on November 28, 1761.

It was noted earlier that pressure had been exerted on the governor to lift the third embargo in time for the profitable (and safer) winter trading season; and this was accordingly done. Captain Ephraim Gilbert took advantage of this to captain a vessel, probably to a North American destination. He was in the midst of his journey when he encountered the 'Negro' sailor Jack Dare, whom he recalled

was owned with the vessel. Dare was suspected of being involved in the revolt and Gilbert confronted him, questioning him very closely. Much to Gilbert's pleasure, Dare confessed his part in it. He promised to give a much larger report if Gilbert could arrange a pardon for him.⁹⁴ This request was significant: for within the schedule of offerings provided to those who informed on others, a simple pardon was the lowest reward possible. It would be strange if a man with no involvement in the conspiracy, and a slave, asked not for manumission but simply for a pardon.

A gleeful Gilbert left Dare at an undisclosed foreign port, and returned to Bermuda. He arrived in St. George's; and on November 26, he presented this proposal at a meeting of the Governor's Council. Popple swiftly certified a pardon for Dare.⁹⁵ For the efforts of the prosecution, Dare's emergence held a promise in the languishing effort to convict all of the conspirators capitally. Thus, the trial of the accused was held off, and the expense that resulted in this postponement duly incurred, in the hope of this confession and description from Jack Dare.⁹⁶

But if the news of Dare was greeted with euphoria among proprietors, a much different emotion was expressed elsewhere. Two days after Gilbert's presentation of Dare's request to the Council, a peculiar encounter befell Smiths Tribe resident Captain Benjamin Albouy. According to Albouy, he was resting below deck in the schooner of Thomas Packwood when, at 9:00 p.m., he was disturbed by a slave boy. When Albouy reached deck, he saw that a large boat was approaching the vessel and coming from a coastline in Bailey's Bay, Hamilton Tribe. His vessel was riding at anchor near the Flatts Village inlet opening. According to a deposition:

[they] seemed to be coming directly on Board...and he could plainly see six men in the Boat, who seem'd to be rowers...⁹⁷

Albouy's threats and yells caused them on two occasions to turn back toward Shelly Bay area of Hamilton Tribe, roughly less than a mile from his position. About fifteen minutes later, the same boat began approaching the schooner again from Shelly Bay; again he yelled at them and they returned to their point of departure. Albouy became fearful, standing on this schooner and looking out into the night: it was roughly 9:30 p.m.. He decided to put the schooner under sail, but changed his mind. He resolved to go to shore and alert the authorities as to what was happening. Albouy, therefore, rowed to shore, and made his way up the hill to the home of Assemblyman Richard Downing Jennings. Jennings was recovering from an illness.

Albouy informed him of the incident, and secured a pistol from him. By the time he had returned to the schooner it was about 10:00 p.m.. All remained quiet until 12:00 a.m., when Albouy saw a large light suddenly blaze brightly from a distant shore near an area he called 'the Point'. It then went out. Another light from Spanish Point in Pembroke cut into the night, and then it too went out: "...both lights," it was stated in the deposition, "...were put out within a minute." At 2:00 a.m., the large boat Albouy had seen hours earlier, was sliding toward the schooner again; and again, Albouy hailed it causing it to return to its point of origin.

Who they were, or rather, what they were, is implied by the deposition's closing remarks: "... the Boat aforementioned [was]... pretty large & at the first time when they were very near his Vessel they row'd so easy that he could hardly distinguish any Oars they had..."⁹⁸ Men who could row a large boat, at night, along a reef-filled northern Bermuda coast, and who were familiar enough with

the archipelago's complicated network of reefs to sail a schooner, at night, away from the islands fit the description of pilots. It is assumed, that is, that the six or so rowers in the boat were either all pilots, or constituted a group composed of at least a few pilots.

It was accepted by Albouy that they had planned to take his vessel, virtually prepared for sailing. As was stated in the deposition: "...he really believes from the Behaviour of the People in the Boat and their not answering to the many different Times he had hailed them, that they had Design to take his vessel away, but finding him on board, and that he kept a good Look out, they were disappointed."⁹⁹ Cyril Packwood argued that this was an attempt of the ring leaders of the conspiracy to escape from the colony. This is plausible.¹⁰⁰

Whether this was an escape or a plan to salvage the revolt (as a reaction to Jack Dare's potential confession), it was a premature act. By March 11, 1762, the courts continued to wait for Dare; and they would be forced to wait longer. Dare escaped and fled from his location through, complained the legislators, "... the means of some evil minded Persons...". They lamented: "...altho' steps are taken to bring the said Jack Dare to these Islands it may be some time first."¹⁰¹ The Commissioners were forced to try the accused without him, and in April, probably a result of his escape, were forced to convict with less than capital evidence. Dare did eventually return to Bermuda, according to Packwood, but this was in July 1762, long after the trials, convictions and punishments of most of the accused.¹⁰²

Conclusion

Albert Camus, the French-Algerian writer and philosopher, once argued that the causes of a revolt lie in the sudden desire of the slave to say 'no': that up until that momentous event, great and small abuses were taken with the appropriate but grudging acquiescence. Then, one event, regardless of its size and shape, became one burden, one demand too great to countenance; and out of that, a revolt appeared. "Having up to now been willing to compromise, the slave suddenly adopts ('because this is how it must be...') an attitude of All or Nothing." The emergent rebel thus proceeds to change his or her world, and that of his or her master's.¹⁰³

Records describing the inner motivations of bondservants, that would aid in unpacking the reasons for conspiratorial revolution, are greatly lacking. One is, thus, thrown into the world of hypotheses and conjecture when piecing together motives and inspirations, and even plots and strategies. Yet, in spite of this, a circumstantial case can be constructed, starting from the first contextual chapters. They help to explore the forces behind these 'denials' in the era of violent and revolutionary resistance.

With the Conspiracy of 1761, the examination outlined a contextual argument: the competing forces of slave customs and bondservant aspirations as they collided, particularly, on the economic field. A society was presented as one in which slaves were given no legal protection against the whims of a proprietor, a condition that expanded after the poisoning conspiracies of the 1720s. It was noted that laws made criminal virtually all self-provisioning projects of bondservants,

exacerbating the power the proprietor could wield over the unfree. Moreover, with every conspiracy came opportunities for the colonial legislators to remove the collection of free 'Negroes' and free 'Mulattos' deemed obnoxious to them. It was a pruning action that often stymied the hope for a path around the relative legal powerlessness and economic exploitation of enslavement.

The involvement of 'blacks' in maritime commerce produced for these 'blacks' hidden sources of wealth, perquisites from privateer raids and new possibilities to trade. This led to the formation of a class which could blunt the poverty possible from systems of expropriation. But enslaved merchant-mariners returned from every journey to a society where even the bodies of slaves could not be protected under the law. They returned to an extreme society where items of wealth, self-confidence and even economic survival stood endangered by the arbitrary whims of a proprietor: sources which could be deprived 'if the proprietor had a mind to'. The enslaved merchant, with immersion in the intangibles and tangibles of the maritime commercial and military system, lived in two incompatible worlds, and as such he endangered the customs of his society. Then the Camusian 'final burden' came: laws that could be countenanced with irritation in the 1730s, re-emerged in the 1760s; but this time, they were met, it is argued here, with a revolutionary conspiracy. Some may see the Seven Years' War or its privations, as the catalyst. But what is clear is that in 1761, the burdens carried after the 1730s were deemed by some bondservants to be intolerable; and without the mechanisms to change the laws (or prevent them), the one option, cited by political scientists as the refuge of the disenfranchised, emerged: the option of revolution. The union of 'black' slave sailors and the scientists of poison nearly

resulted in that 'great victory' of which certain bondsmen, one night in October 1761, so unguardedly spoke.

Yet this event, coupled with purges and the restrictions, was an end to any further attempts at revolution. It was, in essence, the end of the revolutionary cycle begun in 1656. The next period would see confrontations with the 'customs of the country' that used different methods and had different ends.

Epilogue: the legacy

Governor John Pitt had orchestrated a temporary cessation to the politics of poison in 1730, and a series of draconian laws were passed. Pitt and the imperial government had further supported the colonial legislature's attempt to strip away even the hallowed remnants of protections accorded all the 'king's subjects'.

Thirty years later legislators attempted to produce the same metropolitan acquiescence to some of their measures. No more than a day after the Vickers deposition was read to the Council, the Assembly attempted to initiate the passage of a Bill entitled 'An Act for the Better Regulation and Laying Down a Method for Freeing Slaves and the Better Regulating of Them in the Future'.¹⁰⁴ One of its provisions sought to re-establish the tradition of expelling 'Free Negroes' and 'Free Mulattos' from the colony; and it neglected to add a suspending clause that would have prevented its operation until it received assent in England. Suddenly free 'Negroes' such as Rachel Fubler found their freedom in jeopardy, again.

Popple had earlier expressed his dislike of the Bill, so some action was necessary to soften his stance. The first was a brutal verbal attack against the free 'Negro' and free 'Mulatto' population in Bermuda. Legislators first complained that there were "...many Negroes and Mulattoes now residing on these Islands, who [are] under a pretence of being Free Born, or otherwise made free, and who are dispersed thro' the different Parishes..."; that these "...do daily corrupt and debauch the Principles of such as are Slaves, to the utter subversion of the Order and regularity that might otherwise be kept up and observed with regard to Negroes in general throughout these Islands, and who on account of such Irregularities are daily entering into connexion with them, And as far as We can trace were actually not only concerned in the late intended Conspiracy of our Slaves but in all Probability were the Chief Instigators of it...". Legislators further savaged them as having "...such perfidious natures [that they] cannot in any shape be entrusted with our support or defense...", declaring they were a "...growing evil...", using their free status to "...keep Tippling-houses for the Entertainment and reception of our Slaves [and secreting] the Inhabitants Goods [encouraging] our slaves in theft...", as well as giving them advice and setting up an example to them of "...vice & luxury...".¹⁰⁵

Popple, responded to their address in April 1762. He told them that he was unhappy with the sending of a Bill denying the rights of subjects which did not have a suspending clause; and that this was itself sufficient to determine his dislike of it. Their arguments in the address about the 'Free Negroes' and 'Free Mulattos' were, by implication, irrelevant to its acceptability. But he promised he would send their concerns to Whitehall. "I am sorry," he told them, "you have

put me under the disagreeable necessity of not complying with any request you can make, as my Intention is to oblige you in all...". Crucially, however, he promised to inform Whitehall "...that the number of Free Negroes residing here has been & will continue to... [be] as they multiply a great nuisance to these Islands."¹⁰⁶ This was an important concession toward shaping attitudes at Whitehall toward laws restricting 'Free Negroes' and 'Free Mulattos'. However, in his letter to the Lords of Trade and Plantations on March 31, 1762, he was less diplomatic. The Bill, he complained to them, contained clauses which in his opinion were "...not consistent with natural Justice and Equity."

"I must now beg leave to acquaint your Lordships," he concluded, "that my reasons to the Council were, the want of a suspending Clause, and the Injustice, that appear'd to me of banishing a Free People from their native Country, which reasons still prevailing in my opinion, I must beg leave to submit to Your Lordships Judgment..."¹⁰⁷ The metropolitan government appeared to agree, and declared " '...the Act, which provides for banishment of Free Mulattoes under certain descriptions, was unprecedented, but founded upon unjust and unconstitutional principles, and therefore not proper to be confirmed by the Crown.'"¹⁰⁸ The judgement of it as 'unprecedented' may have reflected Whitehall's perverse understanding of Bermudian colonial history, but it established a hallmark beginning in the unravelling of the old customs.

Nonetheless, a conspiratorial 'Sword of Damocles' had been removed, and that which had been a 'custom of the country' since 1656 repudiated. Moreover, a compromise was made with the legislators that would come back to haunt the rights of the newly-protected 'Negro' and 'Mulatto' free. By sending the lurid and

emotional claims of the legislators to Whitehall, Popple made possible new measures which would seek to constrain the expression of legally protected freedom. The new type of laws would now explicitly specify 'Free Negroes, Mulattos, and Indians' in attempts to regulate 'blacks': the phrase 'bond and free' replaced 'Negroes and others slaves' in the Acts of the Assembly. The first law to sport this new expression, and to place new restrictions on 'blacks', bond and free, was *An Act for the Better Government of Negroes, Mulattoes, and Indians, bond or free, and for the More Effectual Punishing Conspiracies and Insurrections of Them*, passed in 1764. It forms the discussion of the next era of resistance.

Yet the year of 1764 would be important to William Popple for more personal reasons. The governor had, throughout 1763, grown progressively ill; and he felt obliged to announce, by the end of that year, his intention to retire and leave for England. He left on January 2, 1764, and Francis Jones was given the government.¹⁰⁹ Popple arrived in England and, soon after, on February 8, 1764, he was dead. He was buried five days later in Hampstead.¹¹⁰

While he was alive and in Bermuda, he superintended 'Popple's Purge'. Six of those accused of involvement in the conspiracy were convicted capitally. Nat, whose statements were the probable cause of his capital conviction, was executed by hanging. A schedule of compensation was drawn up by the Colonial Treasurer. Natt may have been, by the time of his execution, the joint property of Thomas Cox's five children, but he was at the very least employed for their maintenance, an obligation required of him at Cox's death. Thus Nat's execution should have produced some hardship. The compensation his owners received went far beyond the value of an average slave of about Nat's age and physical

condition. To take some examples, York, a 'Negro' man of mariner William Leycroft was valued at £55 in 1758. Margaret Spencer's pilot Peter had been estimated at £50 in 1757, and two men owned by her husband were worth £61 respectively. The children of Thomas Cox, however, were collectively given £70 in compensation for Natt, higher than any contemporary value in the book of inventories (up until September 4, 1761).¹¹¹ The source of this generosity may lie in the peculiar and coincidental presence of Joseph Dill and James Harvey, the executors of Cox's will, in the House of Assembly in 1761. Indeed both Colonial Treasurer Butterfield and Captain Dill were on the board of Commissioners trying the accused conspirators.¹¹² It would seem plausible that, apart from the normal contact between Assemblymen, some influence was exerted on the Colonial Treasury by these probate managers of Natt's labour- on behalf of the Cox family.

Edward Parker, the owner of Peter, had no apparent difficulty accepting the Commission's sentence of death for his bondsman. What probably helped him in his acquiescence was his compensation package: Parker was given much more than the Cox family, and one is tempted to find the source of this not only in the nature of the evidence against Peter, but the Assembly connections of his proprietor. Nonetheless, the Colonial Treasury granted him a substantial £91.¹¹³ Peter (probably arranged by Parker) was taken to Parker's property in Warwick, where he was hanged, and his corpse publicly burnt. Peter had denied his involvement in, and leadership of, the conspiracy; but he had done so in vain.¹¹⁴

Mingo was also convicted and executed, as were Juan, Ben, and Nancy. By February 1762, all of those capitally convicted were dead. With the threat of revolt still hanging over the heads of proprietors, Packwood's assertion that they were

executed in the same way as Peter is plausible:¹¹⁵ that they were taken to their respective proprietors' yards in the Main and lynched in full view of the slaves, 'to strike terror in the rest'. If so, a macabre spectacle of burning corpses would have induced memories, in the minds of those old enough to remember, of an earlier government's reaction to another type conspiracy. Their corpses would have dotted the region that gave birth to conspiratorial revolution and poisoning, marking its denouement as well.

The majority, however, were expelled, and the group of statistics from 1762 to 1764 suggests the scope of this reaction to the Conspiracy of 1761:

Table 24.— Increase/Decrease of Population in Bermuda by Race/Sex, 1762-4

Year	Black Women	Black Men	Black Boys	Black Girls	White Men	White Men	White Men	White Men	White Men
1564	1287	1288	1085	1671	439	2046	1293	1142	
1513	1225	1328	1135	1539	N/A	2183	1120	966	
-51	-62	+40	+50	-132		+137	-173	-176	

Source: Elaine Forman Crane, "The Socioeconomics of a Female Majority in Eighteenth-Century Bermuda," *Signs* 15:2 (Winter 1990) p. 237.

Accepting the existence of a small pox epidemic for the years 1760-2, the population of 'black' women and 'black' men decreased precipitously (51 for 'black' women and 62 for 'black' men) between the years 1762 and 1764. Significantly, with small pox raging, the numbers of 'black' boys and girls increased, by forty and fifty children respectively. 'Popple's purge' clearly ground to a slower pace that which had been the relentless juggernaut of 'black' population expansion.

The Bahamas became concerned that many of Bermuda's conspirators would be sent there. Many, like Oby and Nanny, probably had been; but with the

final major trial of conspirators ending in April, a greater influx could be expected. Indeed the Bahamas, a British colony, was the one place enslaved merchant mariners could be safely disposed of during the war. Thus, in October 1762, the Bahamian legislature passed *An Act to Prevent the Importing into These Islands any Negroes, Mulattoes, and Indians from Bermuda or any other of His Majesties Colonies in America who have been convicted For any High Crimes or Misdemeanours*.¹¹⁶ But Popple's view was that there were far too many slaves in Bermuda generally, and that they would be more profitably employed elsewhere: there was, after all, a persistent demand for enslaved labour in the plantation colonies. Cyril Packwood felt that some of the conspirators were sent to North America.¹¹⁷ It was the other logical place for them to have been exiled to, from a British military perspective.

Among those condemned by a court of law to banishment were the three pilots, Peter, Charles Cuff, and Tom Cooper. They were convicted in April 1762, which meant that Peter, who was among the earliest arrested, remained in prison for six months as the Commissioners awaited Jack Dare's arrival. Of the three, the fate of Charles Cuff is the most difficult to determine. It might have been felt that this skilled pilot should not suffer exile even to the Bahamas; that it was prudent that he remain in Bermuda, under a persistent and potentially murderous gaze of proprietors and the authorities. Clearly no one would have questioned his 'accidental' death at their hands. This life of fearful surveillance without the possibility of departure from the colony was just the type of punishment suggested by his owner, John Paynter: "Wherefore your petitioner most humbly prays your Excellency would take [the concerns noted in the document] ...into your

Consideration, and that you would... change the Sentence given against the said Negro Charles... as your Petitioner will readily enter into any Security your Excellency may be pleased to order for the good Behaviour of such Slave... and that the said Slave shall *never* go off these Islands."[italics added]¹¹⁸ This type of sentence, as stipulated by Paynter, would have alienated Cuff from involvement in the overseas portion of trade (and plunder), and thus from the sources of surplus derived through it.

Margaret Spencer was deprived of Peter's lucrative income for several months and faced a further probability of this deprivation continuing much longer. She, too, submitted a petition to the Council, and declared that she was a widow with a family and "...without any white Man whatsoever in its contribute to the support of it, and that the Negro Man so-called Peter has been for a long Time the only means whereby she has been able to maintain herself and her family, so as not to be Burthensome to her Neighbours."¹¹⁹ She requested that he remain, and that she would give proper security for his 'good behaviour'. Peter's real 'crime' had been 'insolence', and it might have been felt that his long stay in jail was punishment enough. Thus, in August 1772, at Margaret Spencer's death, a man named Peter was listed in the inventory of her property. He was valued at £31 which would fit the valuation of a slave beyond his prime.¹²⁰ It seems likely that this man was the Peter accused of conspiracy ten years earlier, and that to the end of Spencer's life, he continued to support her and her family as an enslaved pilot.

Tom Cooper's proprietor, William Cooper, seemed less willing to accept Tom's involvement in the conspiracy. He submitted a petition, also requesting that he not be banished, and he added the phrase: "...the said Court (on consideration

being had of the Crimes *alleged* against [him]...) thought proper to Sentence [him] ... to Transportation...". [italics added]¹²¹ One might want to think that the Commissioners convicted him on something stronger than an 'allegation'. Nonetheless, William Cooper cited his own "...extreme old age..." and that of his wife's as an argument for Tom Cooper's retention in the colony.¹²² Captain Ephraim Gilbert, whose involvement with Jack Dare might have cost Tom's life, wrote, in support of the petition, that the "...reasonableness of such Recommendation..." had been felt by most of the Commissioners themselves, despite their verdict and sentence.¹²³

Popple agreed: Tom Cooper would not be transported. Several years later, in 1768, William Cooper composed and signed his will. He arranged his bondsman Tom be "...entirely set free & have his own Liberty..." upon the death of William Cooper and his wife.¹²⁴ Tom Cooper was thus set to enjoy, in freedom, the new social order created through the conspiracy; and to enjoy it under a much diminished shadow of legal expulsion.

The future of Rachel Fubler would be paradoxically different in the wake of 1761. Seymour's appearance before the Council, back in September 1761, had been delayed for a week after Fubler's first presentation to that body. The Deputy Provost-Marshal, on the day the Sandys mariner was to appear, told the Board that he had been unable to serve him with the necessary papers, blaming this dereliction of duty on the unavailability of the St. George's-Hamilton ferry's horse boat. Popple declared that the next meeting be held at the home of the ferryman, located on the mainland/Coney Island side of the ferry crossing. Perhaps this sought to ensure that Seymour did not have an unavailability of a ferry/horse boat

as an obstacle to his appearance. After having the Fubler petition read to him, Seymour informed the Council of what it already knew: that the Sandys mariner was still in possession of Fubler's children. The Board [read: Popple], nonetheless, secured Fubler's freedom during the two long years it dealt with the Conspiracy of 1761. But Jonny and Lilly were still in the hands of the Seymours; and though Captain Seymour died in the interim, his wife Mary continued to retain them. Fubler thus secured the services of attorney Henry Bull, and served a writ of *capias* against Mrs. Seymour: the writ would have ordered the authorities to place Mrs. Seymour into custody. Fubler also sued her for the return of her children and for £500 current money- compensation, presumably, for the years the children laboured in the Seymours' service.¹²⁵

But the environment of 1763 was different from that of September 1761. There were, of course, the changes brought about by the conspiracy. Moreover, Popple, who was not well and was pre-occupied with the prospect of going home, had clearly not been attending all of his Council meetings. But he had managed to stymie an Assembly attempt to expel free 'Negroes' and free 'Mulattos', and he was supported in this by the Lords of Trade and Plantations. However, with the prospect of ex-slaves existing unmolested in Bermuda, President Jones made it the point of his government's business in 1764 to encourage the Assembly to initiate a new set of 'Negro laws'. At his first address to the House of Assembly on February 7, 1764, after announcing his acquisition of the government, requested that the legislature "... review such Laws as are expired, or to make such as are of immediate Service..."; and he added, with regards to the slaves:

Permit me to recommend in the most persuasive manner, the necessity of a Law to regulate our Slaves, as also a Summary Method of Trying them in criminal Causes; their Thefts and depredations are so numerous and frequent, that the Oppression the Inhabitants groan under cry aloud for Redress, and I am firmly persuaded you will think this an Object worthy of your mature Consideration.¹²⁶

It was a repetition of the types of allegations made as a prelude to the servile codes in the 1730s. Nonetheless, within one day, February 25, 1764, barely three weeks after Jones' request, all branches of the government were in a position to assent to or pass the *Act for the Better Government of Negroes, etc., Bond or Free*.¹²⁷

By the time Rachel Fubler's writ was examined by the Court of Assizes in the winter of 1763, it was given a different reception. Justices of the Court of the Assizes at first refused to rule on the writ when it was submitted to them. Two of them, Jonathan Burch and Thomas Gilbert, sat on the Governor's Council, and presented the Fubler case to a meeting it held in Paget parish. It was a meeting held, significantly, not in St. George's at Bridge House, but at the home parish of Francis Jones. It was claimed at this meeting that Fubler's brief went far beyond her original petition; and Councillors focused attention on the writ, which they declared was "... of dangerous Consequence to the peace of these Islands...".¹²⁸ Moreover, the Councillors concluded the meeting by declaring that Fubler herself was not free. The Board unanimously agreed that the court further delay its decision on the writ and toss the whole matter before the Assembly. The Council, far away from Popple, thus repudiated the authority of his 1756 certification of Elizabeth Burgess' deed of manumission, and with no clear basis recorded for so doing.

The Assembly met on the day of the last Governor's Council meeting chaired by William Popple, on December 2, 1763.¹²⁹ On the same day that it met to consider Fubler's writ and petition, it had turned down Popple's request for compensation for the shortfalls in his supply of 'Negroes' and firewood. The Assemblymen were in a defiant mood.

A joint-committee of the Executive Council and Assembly agreed with the earlier Council decision about the writ, that it portended dangerous consequences; and it declared that Fubler was not free, but a slave. It ordered that she be placed "...into the Hands of M^r. Seymour... who as this House is informed hath sufficient Right to the said Rachel."¹³⁰ Thus, Rachel Fubler lost what her deposition had called in September 1761 "...the most valuable blessing on earth..."

Endnotes: Chapter VI

¹ EXCO 1746-65, pp. 332-3.

² Ibid., pp. 334-5.

³ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 149; EXCO 1746-1765, pp. 347-8. Regarding Vickers' family, see *Early Bermuda Wills*, p. 626.

⁴ EXCO 1746-65, pp. 347-8.

⁵ Ibid., p. 348.

⁶ Ibid., p. 348.

⁷ BW 1744-72, p. 197.

⁸ EXCO 1746-65, p. 348.

⁹ Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: the Saint Domingue revolution from below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), p. 60.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 60.

¹² See above, chapter III: "Forces and Contradictions: Enslaved Africans"; and Rodney, "The Gold Coast", pp. 189, 322. Regarding Hausa communities and merchants living along the Ashanti and Fanti Gold Coast see *ibid.*, p. 324, and Freeman, *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman*, pp. 287-8.

¹³ Terry Alford, *Prince among Slaves: the true story of an African prince sold into slavery in the American south* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), *passim*.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁵ See above, chapter III: "Forces and Contradictions: Enslaved Africans".

¹⁶ Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 62.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 60.

²⁰ Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 62.

²¹ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *Journal of the House of Assembly, Sessional Papers, 1756, 1759-64*, August 9, 1759: "At a Committee of the Conference holden by the Appointment of both Houses at the House of Mrs. Duckworth's this 9th Day of Aug.^r to confer on the Negro Laws." Notable persons attending this meeting were John Slater (the Attorney-General) and Jonathan Burch (from the Assembly). Burch sat on the Courts of Assizes and the Governor's Council in 1763, and re-examined Rachel Fubler's case. He was also, as Justice of the Peace for St. George's in 1761, responsible for issuing warrants for the apprehension of Nat, George, and Peter; and he had sat on the Council when the Vickers' deposition was presented. See EXCO 1746-65, pp. 348, 422.

²² Before 1760, the last re-formulation of laws regulating 'Negroes and other slaves' had been passed in 1742: *An Act Renewing the Act for Better Regulating Negroes, (&c.)...*; see *Statute Laws of Bermuda, 1620-1952*, p. xiii; see also, *Journals of the House of Assembly, 1759-62*, *passim*.

²³ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *Acts of the House of Assembly 1755-99*, pp. 97-100; see also, Bermuda Bermuda Archives. *Journals of the House of Assembly, 1759-62*, *passim*.

²⁴ CO 40 9, p. 30.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

²⁶ CO 37 19, p. 54.

²⁷ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 155.

²⁸ BW 1734-44, vol. 7, p. 138; BW vol. 12, pt. 1, pp. 229-30; see also *Early Bermuda Wills, 1629-1835*, p. 130.

²⁹ BW 1734-44, vol. 7, p. 138.

³⁰ BW 1707-13, vol. 4, p. 132.

³¹ Joseph Prudden, as a Southampton ship's carpenter, is linked by this thesis to Joseph Prudden, listed in Mrs. Hallett's *Early Bermuda Wills*. Joseph Prudden had died intestate in the 1700s. See *Early Bermuda Wills*, p. 467.

³² See BW 1734-44, v. 7, *passim*.

³³ BW 1712-1808, v. 12, pt. 1, p. 230; *Early Bermuda Wills, 1629-1835*, p. 130.

³⁴ BW 1712-1808, v. 12, pt. 1, p. 230.

³⁵ See list of representatives for the House of Assembly, in *Journals of the House of Assembly, Sessional Papers*, March 8, 1760.

- ³⁶ William Frith Williams, *An Historical and Statistical Account of the Bermudas from their Discovery to the Present Time* (London: Thomas Cautley Newby, 1848), p. 77.
- ³⁷ BW 1744-1772, vol. 8, p. 197.
- ³⁸ BW vol. 9, p. 28.
- ³⁹ EXCO 1746-65, p. 394.
- ⁴⁰ BW 1734-44, vol. 7, p. 144.
- ⁴¹ Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, p. 236.
- ⁴² The incident occurred on November 18, 1753. See EXCO 1746-65, p. 134.
- ⁴³ Chapter IV: "Forces and Contradictions: Enslaved Merchant Sailors".
- ⁴⁴ EXCO 1746-65, p. 376.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 376-7.
- ⁴⁶ BW 1734-44, v. 7, p. 144.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 144.
- ⁴⁸ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 59.
- ⁴⁹ He was valued at £28. A ten year old boy in the 'King's Slaves List', named Pompey, was valued at £18. His value was £7 less than the value given a thirty year old adult, and given his entry as a boy, it seems reasonable to determine him to have been somewhere between the ages of twelve and eighteen. See Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 59; BW 1734-44, v. 7, p. 144.
- ⁵⁰ *Journals of the House of Assembly, Sessional papers*, 1755, 1759-64, Dec. 5, 1761. He seems to have joined on October 15, 1761, according to an entry in the House of Assembly minutes: "...Captain Richard Jennings was qualified as Assembly Man by taking the usual Oath." *Journals of the House of Assembly*, 1759-62, October 15, 1761.
- ⁵¹ *Journals of Assembly*, 1759-62, December 17, 1760.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, December. 17, 1760.
- ⁵³ Williams, *An Historical and Statistical Account of Bermuda*, p. 77.
- ⁵⁴ *Journals of Assembly*, March 11, 1762.
- ⁵⁵ EXCO 1746-65, p. 373.
- ⁵⁶ Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels*, pp. 236-9.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 234, 238.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 230.
- ⁵⁹ Michael Craton, "The Passion to Exist: Slave Rebellions in the British West Indies 1650-1832", *Journal of Caribbean History* (1980), p. 7.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ⁶³ Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels*, p. 238.
- ⁶⁴ EXCO 1746-65, p. 187.
- ⁶⁵ *Journals of Assembly*, 1759-62, January 24, 1761.
- ⁶⁶ EXCO 1746-65, p. 223.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 223.
- ⁶⁸ CO 37 31, p. 3.
- ⁶⁹ CO 37 31, pp. 1-2.
- ⁷⁰ EXCO 1746-65, p. 373.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 373.
- ⁷² CO 37 19, p. 55.
- ⁷³ *Journals of Assembly*, 1759-62, October 21, 1761.
- ⁷⁴ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 150.
- ⁷⁵ *Statute Laws of Bermuda, 1620-1952*, p. x.
- ⁷⁶ *Journals of Assembly*, April 3, 1760.
- ⁷⁷ CO 37 19, p. 54.
- ⁷⁸ EXCO 1746-65, p. 349.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 352.
- ⁸⁰ CO 37 19, p. 54.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- ⁸² CO 37 19, p. 55.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

- ⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 55.
- ⁸⁷ EXCO 1746-65, p. 373.
- ⁸⁸ CO 37 19, p. 55.
- ⁸⁹ *Journals of Assembly 1759-62*, October 22, 1761.
- ⁹⁰ See list in the *Journals of the House of Assembly, Sessional Papers, 1759, 1759-64*.
- ⁹¹ CO 37 19, p. 54.
- ⁹² Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 151; *Journals of Assembly*, March 11, 1762.
- ⁹³ CO 37 19, p. 55.
- ⁹⁴ EXCO 1746-65, pp. 356-7.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 356-7.
- ⁹⁶ *Journals of Assembly, 1759-62*, March 11, 1762.
- ⁹⁷ EXCO 1746-65, p. 359.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 360.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 360.
- ¹⁰⁰ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 152.
- ¹⁰¹ *Journals of Assembly 1759-62*, March 11, 1762.
- ¹⁰² Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 152.
- ¹⁰³ Albert Camus, *The Rebel: an essay on man in revolt* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 15.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Journals of Assembly, 1759-62*, October 16, 1761.
- ¹⁰⁵ CO 37 19, pp. 64-5.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Journals of Assembly*, April 10, 1762.
- ¹⁰⁷ CO 37 19, p. 62.
- ¹⁰⁸ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 155.
- ¹⁰⁹ EXCO 1746-65, p. 423.
- ¹¹⁰ *The Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, vol. XVI (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), p. 149.
- ¹¹¹ EXCO 1746-65, p. 411.
- ¹¹² *Journals of Assembly, 1759-62*, October 21, 1761.
- ¹¹³ EXCO 1746-65, p. 411.
- ¹¹⁴ Williams, *An Historical and Statistical Account of Bermuda*, p. 77.
- ¹¹⁵ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 156.
- ¹¹⁶ CO 23 7, p. 237.
- ¹¹⁷ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 156.
- ¹¹⁸ EXCO 1746-65, pp. 394-5.
- ¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 393.
- ¹²⁰ Sam, a 'Negro Mulattoe' man, was listed in the same inventory as worth £56-5-0; a 'Negro' boy Ben was valued at £43-15-0, and a 'Negro' man David was valued at £37-12-6. BW vol. 9, p. 28.
- ¹²¹ EXCO 1746-65, p. 395.
- ¹²² Ibid., pp. 395-6.
- ¹²³ Ibid., p. 396.
- ¹²⁴ BW v. 12, p. 1, pp. 238-9.
- ¹²⁵ EXCO 1746-65, pp. 422-3; *Black's Law Dictionary: definitions of the terms and phrases of American and English jurisprudence, ancient and modern*, edited by Henry Black (St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing, 1979), p. 188.
- ¹²⁶ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. *A Journal of the Votes and Proceedings of the General Assembly of these Islands 19th July 1762 to 25th April 1770*, February 7, 1764.
- ¹²⁷ *Privates Acts, 1704-94*, p. 91.
- ¹²⁸ EXCO 1746-65, pp. 422-3.
- ¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 423.
- ¹³⁰ *Journals of the General Assembly 1762-1770*, December 2, 1763.

PART II

THE ERA OF NON-VIOLENT RADICALISM

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Langston Hughes, *Harlem*

Chapter VII

The Context for Nineteenth-Century Radicalism in Bermuda, 1764-1834

Prologue

Walking through the churchyard of what is now called the St. Peter's Church in St. George's, one can feel oneself re-treading paths taken 169 years ago by the British governess Susette Lloyd. Ms. Lloyd had arrived in Bermuda during the summer of 1829; and on the first Sunday of her arrival, as she made her way to services at the parish church, she found herself taking a meditative stroll around its adjacent cemetery.

"A country churchyard is at all times an object of interest," she wrote in her letters, "with its many mingled graves of the bemoaned and the mourner- of the aged pilgrim and the infant of a day; its holy texts, and the sacred communion between the living and the dead...".

Following a path she might have traced, passing a mass of grave-marker stumps and massive vaults under the tower of the church, one stops and looks to the west. There one sees a grey wall, its structure interrupted by a large entrance leading to another graveyard beyond it. Susette Lloyd described what she thought she saw of it in 1829: "...the rich and the poor meet together- but I cannot in this instance add- the bond and the free, for here as in the other West Indian islands, where slavery draws the broad line of demarcation, they are interred in distinct grounds."¹ A modern plaque adorning the wall makes clear the meaning of the

'broad line of demarcation' Lloyd had misrepresented in her letter: for beyond the ancient stone wall were buried 'Negro' and 'Coloured' Anglicans, bond and free.

But if Susette Lloyd failed to notice the true significance of the graveyard demarcation, she did provide an accurate interpretation of what she saw in the old church itself; for as she took her seat within the hierarchically-organised pew system, and then cast her eyes around the church, she saw the outlines of a socio-political conflict:

The church was well attended. The negroes and coloured people occupied a place by themselves in the gallery, and I was sorry to observe the extraordinary vanity of dress displayed by some of the black women. I am told that they will make any sacrifice to gratify their love of finery.²

A two-fold notion of the 'customs of the country' has been offered in this thesis. It includes the body of laws and customs maintaining the system of racial slavery. But it also concerns what has been introduced, in part, in the above vignette: the body of laws and practices which promoted a subordination of 'Negroes' and 'coloureds/mulattos' to 'whites', and mandated racial segregation. The evolution of an order constituted by both slavery and institutionalised racialism was described in the historical context chapter of this thesis.

Some studies on nineteenth-century servile resistance in the Americas have focused on 'Negro' and 'coloured' anti-slavery movements.³ This emphasis, however, can only be problematically undertaken in the examination of Bermuda resistance: for data on a clear desire by 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' to repeal the principle of slavery are simply not as abundant. To say this, of course, is not to say there were no such movements. It merely seeks to point out that what is available

is often a series of insinuations or hints. Captain Andrew Durnford, for example, whose reaction to the Saint-Domingue servile revolt will be discussed below, implied that the slowly evolving Haitian Revolution had an influence on the expectations of Bermudian bondservants. This influence was inextricably tied to an anti-slavery attitude; and the most obvious expression of local anti-slavery feeling was that expressed in the narrative of Mary Prince. Indeed, it was also a conspicuous example of an alliance between English metropolitan liberalism and 'Negro'/'Coloured' radicalism. Still, both examples, the best examples of a reaction to the principle of racial servitude, provide weak foundations for the study of local anti-slavery.

Thus the examination of resistance in this section concerns primarily attempts to undermine racially subordinating practices and laws. These attempts will be seen as including aspirations of 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' for equality, which strongly contradicted the principles of the 'customs of the country'. Lloyd, in her examination of the burial and seating arrangements at the St. George's church, introduced the customs under contention.

But the 'extraordinary vanity' Lloyd was sorry she saw made up part of the 'Negro' and 'coloured' aspirations directly clashing against the notions of social subordination. Indeed, the controversy over what 'Negroes' should wear in the nineteenth-century church gallery repeated, in kind, earlier, eighteenth-century concerns about 'Negroes' dressing 'beyond their station'. This type of challenge to what was deemed the 'Negro's place' was probably what really annoyed the British governess.

Other challenges will also be explored in this section, the most important concerning education. The desire for religious education and the execution of that desire most clearly represented all of the issues related to nineteenth-century radicalism: 'Negro' and 'coloured' projects and aspirations; metropolitan assistance; local colonial reaction in defence of the 'customs of the country'; and the emergence of a compromise. Specifically, it will be shown how, since Governor John Heydon and Bishop George Berkeley, the type of education advocated for slaves was religious conversion. From the 1790s, this tradition was replaced by an active interest among metropolitan leaders to satisfy 'Negro' and 'mulatto' desires for literacy. But resistance to that type of instruction from the colonial elite was immediate. They feared in particular that it would make their slaves unsuited to their station and menial obligations.

The process in which these forces arose and produced a compromise is the theme of that discussion. Yet, the quest for equality also meant agitation by 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' against the civil and legal disabilities placed on them. An examination of these activities, following the theme discussed above, will conclude the second part of the chapter on 'radical' resistance.

The demands and projects for equality can only be understood through a study of the post-1764 context. One portion of this context was comprised by changes in the economy, particularly from 1822 to 1834; the second, a changing demography which challenged a longstanding numerical preponderance; the third, the shift in metropolitan attitudes to slavery, which constituted an 'ideological revolution'; and the fourth, an international slaveocracy confronted with

bondsman revolt in Saint-Domingue. The second half of this chapter is concerned with these sudden changes. But, the first half will examine the pre-eminent element of the context: the emergence of those laws and practices that composed the 'customs of the country' in the post-1764 era.

I. The Creation of a New Social and Political Order after 1764

The customs of the country, 1764-1834

The attempt by the colonial legislature to expel free 'blacks' and free 'mulattos' led to the articulation of a new policy and a new compromise. Banishing or re-enslaving them, save for criminal causes, was unacceptable, and any law advocating this practice would be repudiated by Whitehall. But latitude would be given to those seeking to reduce the number of rights free 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' enjoyed.

Thus, from 1764, a new political theme emerged, symbolised in the oft-repeated phrase 'bond or free'. It reflected the desire of the 'white' proprietor class and the colonial leadership to reduce the gap between the rights of slaves and the rights of free 'blacks'; and increase the gap between the socio-political conditions enjoyed by these free people and the socio-political conditions enjoyed by the 'whites'. Putting it another way, the prevailing socio-political theme of the era of

radicalism was the maintenance over free 'blacks' and free 'people of colour' of as much of the traditional power held over slaves as was possible: as it was described in 1834 by a contingent of free 'black' and 'coloured' petitioners, "...the same strictness of treatment and severity of discipline which may be deemed necessary to maintain order among the Slaves...".⁴

The primary body of laws which codified many, though not all, 'customs of the country' after 1764, was passed that year as the 'constitutional' *Act for the Better Government of Negroes, Mulattoes and Indians, Bond and Free, and for the more Effectual Punishing Conspiracies and Insurrections of them* (1764). What is meant by 'constitutional' is that it set in law (revised with the *Amelioration Act* of 1827), a new order of political and legal rights for bond and free 'Negroes', 'Indians', and 'Mulattos'.

An earlier discussion outlined its prohibitions on 'obeah' practice- the outlawing specifically of the psycho-physical and physical operations of the *obayifo*. Both entailed, upon conviction, a felony-punishment. But the prohibition on the psycho-physical acts of the *obayifo* (prohibitions against the depositing of substances under beds, etc., to 'affect the mind') sought to make difficult the political aspects of obeah practice. Thus, the political force of obeah, its use in the politics of servile resistance, had been criminalised in code, and the prosecution of *abayifo* easier: under the new post-1764 order, it would be more difficult for *abayifo* to practice, even as medics; and thus, one would expect persons resembling in type Sarah Bassett to meet with increasing scrutiny. The restriction of *abayifo* before 1764, even after the conspiracies of 1730, was never as severe as it was with the passing of the *Act for the Better Government of Negroes, Mulattoes*

and Indians, Bond and Free. Before 1764, restrictions were applied haphazardly, if at all.

Secondly, the meaning a 'slave status' was given more precision in the 1764 Act of Assembly. Yet the definition was such that it took on a convoluted and *ad hoc* appearance:

... it is hereby enacted and ordained.... that as well all Persons who have been at any time heretofore imported into these Islands, as those that shall hereafter from time to time be imported into these Islands and the descendants of all such and were not Christians in their native country, except Turks and Moors in Amity with his Majesty, and such who can prove their being free, [in] England or any other Christian Country, before they were shipped for transportation hither, shall be accounted and be Slaves, and as such be here bought and sold notwithstanding a conversion to Christianity after their importation...⁵

Thus, Heydon's Proclamation had again been codified to reconcile metropolitan politico-morality to the needs of the colonial elite. It codified, by extension, the new protection of 'Free Negroes', 'Free Mulattos' and 'Free Indians', by making it clear that the Act did not reduce to slavery those deemed "...bona fide free...". Since the metropolitan government had ensured the 'bona fide free people of colour' would not be expelled, the Act can be interpreted, from within a Bermudian logic, as an assurance that they would not be enslaved either. The 'slavery provision' of the Act further codified the principle that children were to inherit the condition of slavery or freedom from their mothers.⁶

'Negro', 'Indian', and 'Mulatto' children might also have inherited certain other restrictions from their mothers as well. A provision which placed an 'interactive disability' on "... any Negro, Indian, Mulatto or Mustee, whether bond or free..." had an added clause: "... whether bond or free [and] not descended from a White Woman...".⁷ By 'interactive disability', what is referred to is the body of

restrictions placed on the actions of people towards each other. Its particular application here concerns the restriction placed on any 'Negro', 'Mulatto', and even 'Mustee' and 'Indian', not descended of a 'white' woman, who struck a 'white' person: whether in self-defence or otherwise, such persons could expect "... [to] be either banished off these Islands or have both of his, h r or their ears cut off in like manner as hereafter in this Act is mentioned."⁸ It seems that the protection of free status for 'Negroes', 'Mulattos', 'Indians' and 'Mustees' caused legislators to be more precise as to the type of free person they could expel from the colony; and by extension, it ensured that an attitude of docility (previously assisted by a threat of expulsion or slavery) was still possible in the new post-1764 slave society.

It is within this context that the exertions of Mary Prince, and her conflicts with 'Mr. D-', should be seen:

He had an ugly fashion of stripping himself quite naked and ordering me to wash him in a tub of water. This was worse to me than all the licks. Sometimes when he called me to wash him I would not come, my eyes full of shame. He would then come to beat me. One time I had plates and knives in my hand, and I dropped both plates and knives, and some of the plates were broken. He struck me so severely for this that at last I defended myself, for I thought it was high time to do so.⁹

Her concluding phrase "...I thought it was high time to do so..." implied a reservation in the use of self-defence, a re-occurring inhibition throughout the text. It was one more explanation, if any were needed, for the reticence of 'Negroes', 'Mulattos' or 'Indians', to use force to protect themselves against any 'white'. Indeed, one can conclude that the provision delayed her retaliation to the point of what seems to be desperation.

Moreover, 'Mr. D-' , who also beat his daughter with impunity, was assured himself of protection through the Act of 1764. If this Act did nothing else, it provided 'whites' with the psychological protection of colonial government involvement, should 'whites' (proprietors or otherwise) have difficulties with 'Negroes', 'Mulattos' or 'Indians', bond or free. It must also be reiterated that the law which provided protection of the subject from prosecution if, in the course of correction, a slave was killed, would remain in operation until 1789. The Act of 1764 is perhaps best viewed as a temporary extension of this law.

Restrictions placed on rights in any of the colony's courts, what are here called 'forensic disabilities', were criticised specifically in the 1820s. These particular nineteenth-century restrictions more directly and clearly grew out of the political developments of 1764. Complaints against free 'blacks' and free 'mulattos', levelled by the Assembly to convince Popple to order their expulsion, provided the specific root for these 'forensic disabilities'. The 'perfidious nature' of the 'Free People of Colour' [to be read as inclusive of free 'blacks'], as imagined by the Assemblymen, was the perfect starting point to question their value as sworn witnesses or jurymen in the local courts of law.

Thus, no 'Negro', 'Mulatto', or 'Indian', bond or free, was permitted to serve as a witness in any court, except upon the trial of bondservants, and in this instance to give evidence only. Such evidence could only be procured in capital cases against bondservants. This was, no doubt, to ensure that poison conspirators and servile revolutionaries were not spared capital punishment when a 'Free Person of Colour' was available to provide the convicting evidence. This testimony was to be given under a greater burden in support its truthfulness; and

should either a slave or 'free person of colour' be declared in court to have provided false evidence, the alleged perjurer, without further trial, was to "...have one ear nailed to a post or tree, to stand there for half an hour; and then to have the ear cut off...". The process was repeated, resulting in the victim losing both ears.¹⁰

When Chief Justice James Christie Esten spoke with dismay in 1826 about these 'forensic disabilities', he focused on the more mundane problems they engendered for free 'Negroes' and free 'Coloureds'. "It is a great hardship," he told a meeting of the Court of Assizes, "... that the evidence of free persons of colour should not be admissible in Courts of Justice, in civil and in criminal proceedings."¹¹ He did not detail the hardship, but one obvious problem concerned criminal cases: criminal acts could be committed against free 'blacks' and 'people of colour' without redress in the courts when the only persons giving evidence were 'free black' and 'free coloured' victims against a 'white' defendant. But it also rendered virtually impossible civil litigation concerning 'blacks' and 'coloureds' (either as plaintiffs or defendants) which involved 'whites'.

Early laws almost by extension forbade 'Negroes and other slaves' the right to any sort of land ownership. As stated, the implication of local laws outlawing slave self-provisioning was that no land ownership by them was to be deemed possible, in contradistinction to the policies adopted in the larger Caribbean islands such as Jamaica. Yet the term 'Negro and other slaves' seemed to suggest that all 'Negroes', regardless of their status as bond or free, were covered by these Acts of Assembly. Otherwise, it is difficult to find a provision that explicitly denied 'Free Negroes' and 'Free Mulattos' the right to land

ownership; indeed, there were, before 1764, so few free 'blacks' that such explicitness was probably not deemed necessary.

Nonetheless, from at least 1800, land ownership by free 'blacks' was allowed and recorded by colonial officials. A census compiled sometime between 1788 and 1800 recorded one 'black' freeholder, a man named Brown Marshall. He owned one acre of land in Warwick valued at £12; and together with his house, it was worth £62. The rest of the 'blacks' on that list, twelve in number, were renting or leasing land from 'white' freeholders.¹² It would seem that if there were any laws of forbidding free 'black' or free 'coloured' land ownership, they had fallen into desuetude by 1800.

The *Amelioration Act* passed in 1827, which will be discussed in greater detail below, officially protected land ownership by free 'blacks', while preventing this from undermining established socio-political customs:

... no slave or free person of colour who is not or hereafter may be[,] seized or possessed of any lands... shall be considered or taken as a freeholder, for any other purpose whatever, for the enjoyment and protection of the said tenements or freeholds, and selling, leasing, or assigning the same; and that no slave or free person, whether freeholder or not, shall be a juror, or shall be elected to, or hold any, parochial or public office whatever, and that no slave or free person of colour shall purchase or occupy any seat or pew in any church except in such part of such church as shall or may be set apart for or allocated to slaves and free persons of colour, by the parishioners.¹³

Yet, in spite of their socio-political 'disabilities', free 'Negroes', 'mulattos' and 'mustees', before and after 1827, were obliged to pay some parochial taxes and charges. James Conyers, collector of taxes for Paget parish, implied as much when he placed an advertisement in the *Bermuda Gazette*: "[o]wners or Possessors of Slaves, Horses, Mares or Geldings, as well as Free Negroes, Mullattoes or Mustees, within the Parish of Paget, that have not yet paid up their rates for the

last year [1798], are requested to call and settle them with the subscriber within Twenty Days from the date hereof, otherwise they will be proceeded against according to law."¹⁴

The cliché of the era would define this as a 'taxation without representation', but another implication is more relevant to note: that the reality of having free 'Negroes', mulattos', and 'mustees' in Bermuda meant the possibility of their ownership of land, produce and life stock. It also implied their capacity to retain the profits accrued from these, and the right to sell and dispose of their possessions as they desired. Indeed, within the profitable economy of the artisan, a free artisan was, of course, able to retain his wages as well. The implications of this point will be explored further below.

But regarding to the ability of these free 'Negroes' and free 'mulattos' to involve themselves in commerce, attempts were undertaken by colonial leaders to constrain this also. New laws would fill the gap left in the 'constitutional' Act of 1764. Fifteen years after the Act of 1764 had been swiftly adopted, the colonial Assembly passed *An Act to prevent Vending or Retailing Goods, Wares, Merchandise by Negroes Mulattos or Mustees Whether Bond or Free, Wandering up and down Throughout these Islands- And also the Sale of Goods Wares and Merchandize by Lottery, Dice Cards or Raffling- And to Prevent Negroes Mulattoes or Mustees in these Islands whether bond or free from exercising the Trade or Business of a Butcher* (1779).¹⁵

It complained of 'frauds' and 'abuses' suffered at the hands of mercantile 'Negroes', and 'Mulattos', and 'mustees', but it was clearly a reaction against the profitable wartime sale of produce, and the continuing success of the 'black'

provisioning network. Indeed, the overseas network is implied as the preamble complained of the illegal (and profitable) importation of items: items which were then hawked or retailed by 'blacks', bond and free. This occurred, the Act declared, to the "... Prejudice and Injury of the Commerce of these Islands, and to the great discouragement of Merchants residing in these Islands and other fair Traders in the honest and lawful Exercise of their respective Callings."¹⁶ The Act thus outlawed the commerce of free 'Negroes', 'Mulattos', and 'mustees' absolutely; and slaves were obliged to possess a certificate from their proprietors detailing the quantity, weight and number of the items sold. It also, as the title implied, forbade free 'Negroes', 'Mulattos', and 'Mustees', from entering the trade of the butcher, but did not deny this right to slaves under the management of their owners.¹⁷ It ensured that proprietors would reap the benefits from this profitable activity without the competition of free 'Negroes', 'Mulattos' or 'Mustees'. The law was to run for two years.¹⁸

One might draw the conclusion that the attempts to continue a 'slave-society order' of the type that existed before 1764 met with some success. 'Blacks', both slave and free, filed to the galleries of local churches, or peered at services through the windows from the outside. They utilised the back door entrances of local 'white'-owned houses as was expected of them as slaves. 'Interactive disabilities', particularly against free 'blacks', would not be repealed in the *Amelioration Act* of 1827, but were only refined: "...any slave or free person [who] shall assault or offer violence to or towards *any* white person... shall, upon conviction thereof, be punished with transportation for life, or for a limited time, or to confinement and hard labour for a limited time, with whipping

not exceeding thirty-nine lashes at any one time...". [Italics added]¹⁹ It did, however, remove dismemberment for such an offence from the law.

Thus, with the greater economic and socio-political dependence of free 'blacks' and free 'coloureds' on 'whites', there developed a strategy of overt docility. Missionary John Stephenson would report 'Negroes', bond and free, bowing and curtsying to him; and he was, as will be noted below, upbraided by the government for returning the favour: for introducing, by this, what were called 'social innovations'. Yet this strategy of docility accompanied, as this example suggests, a politics of resistance. What were the background causes for the shift to a politics of radical resistance? An examination of the economic and demographic context now follows.

II. Economic, Social, Ideological and Political 'Revolutions'

The Declining Economy, 1822-34

The years before 1720 were a period of economic growth in the colony, supported by the successful transfer to the maritime economy. Ironically, 100 years later, a similar economic pattern developed. There was a period of stagnation or collapse from 1822, and this time it was occasioned by the decline of the maritime economy. As with the death of the Bermuda tobacco economy leading to the rise of the maritime revolution, the ultimate cause was North American competition.

One of the indulgences Bermudian proprietors requested from Britain was for the establishment in the colony of a free port, not dissimilar to that which had existed and flourished during the eighteenth century in St. Eustatius. This required some relaxation of the Navigation Acts. Even a governor, George Beckwith, had supported the idea.²⁰ Yet, it was during the War of 1812 that the Free Port Act was passed by the metropolitan Parliament; and in 1813 (with the termination of a North American blockade cutting off the colony from its chief supply of food stores) the benefits of this Act began to emerge.²¹ United States shipping departed for Bermuda where it sold its goods in exchange for items such as sugar, molasses, and rum brought in by Bermudian ships from the British West Indies. Bermudian-owned and manned vessels proceeded to the other islands of the British West Indies to sell the North American exports in demand there.²²

However, in 1823, direct trade emerged between the other British colonies and the United States. Bermuda was, thus, by-passed. Import duties in the United States were reflected into the price of goods sold by Bermudian merchants to their West Indian clients. This gave a greater competitive advantage to capital-rich United States dealers in the Caribbean selling the same North American produce.²³ Import and export statistics for the years 1822 to 1825 suggest a slow decline of the carrying trade in particular, with implications for the maritime economy overall.

Table 25.— Shipping Returns, 1822-5: Imports and Ships Entering

Year	Total Value of Imports*	Ships Inwards	Tons
	258713		28669
	143620		14581
	158676		14457
	140317		14102

Source: Olwyn M. Blouet, "Governor Reid in Post-Emancipation Bermuda, 1839-46: an advocate of social and economic change", *Journal of Caribbean History*, vol. 9, (May 1977), p. 4.

*In Bermuda currency.

Table 26.— Shipping Returns, 1822-5: Exports and Ship Departures

	Total Value of Exports*		Tons
	133531		30122
	68707		14859
	56115		15569
	45396		13900

Source: Olwyn M. Blouet, "Governor Reid in Post-Emancipation Bermuda, 1839-46: an advocate of social and economic change", *Journal of Caribbean History*, vol. 9, (May 1977), p. 4.

*In Bermuda currency.

This seemed to explain to one historian why a post-emancipation governor felt it was necessary for the islands' economy to become based on agricultural production. Yet large numbers of Bermuda colonists had long before his advocacy become involved in agricultural activity. The returns of the Blue Books for 1834

record 1,180 people employed in praedial work, as opposed to 374 in manufacture (probably predominantly shipbuilding) and 544 in commerce. This was out of a total population of 12,424.²⁴ The number of agriculturists had declined from 1,953 recorded in the Blue Books of 1832; 356 and 477 had then been recorded in manufacturing and commerce respectively.²⁵

Although Lloyd saw the source of Bermuda's pre-1820s wealth elsewhere, her conclusion is in harmony with the view of economic decline and stagnation from 1822. "There are two or three rich heiresses in Bermuda," wrote Lloyd, "but the people in general are not opulent; for all the wealth of the colony is in the hands of four or five rich individuals, who made large fortunes during the last war, the golden era of Bermuda, when prize ships were carried into its harbours, and it became the seat of a regular court of trade. With the termination of the war, the consequence of Bermuda declined; and it is now indebted for its political importance to the advantages of its geographical situation."²⁶ The effect this economic decline had on bondservants is more important, and will be properly explored below.

Demographic Revolutions

The total population of the colony by December 31, 1806 was 10,038.²⁷ The 'white' population was steadily decreasing against the 'black' and, by the end of that year, had lost its numerical predominance: 4,798 were described as 'white', and 5,240 described as 'Free Negro and Coloured' or 'Slave'. The total of 'black' and 'coloured' in the colony had gone beyond that of the 'whites' by 442 people. This end of a 'demographic Aryavarta' in Bermuda was an extremely important psychological factor as it related to 'white' political confidence and security.

The traditionally-attributed source of these demographic developments had been that of natural population increase within the *enslaved* community. Those within this group were, by 1806, enumerated separately from the 'free black' and 'free coloured' populations. Governor George Beckwith, during the last years of the 1700s, recorded these statistics:

Table 27.— Births, Deaths and Natural Increase within the Enslaved Population

<i>Year</i>	<i>Births</i>	<i>Deaths</i>	<i>Natural Increase</i>
1796	194	96	97
1797	161	106	55
1798	198	112	86

Source: Cyril Packwood, *Chained on the Rock: slavery in Bermuda* (New York: Eliseo Torres, 1975), p. 80.

The result was an overwhelming lead recorded of 'Negro' to 'white' children (children noted in the records as those under sixteen): 1,145 'Negro' boys and 1,126 'Negro' girls, equalling 2,271 'Negro' children; against 785 'white' boys and 789 'white' girls, equalling 1,574 'white' children.²⁸

Table 28.— 'Negro' and 'White' Children. 1806

'Negro' Boys	1145
'Negro' Girls	1126
'Negro' children	2271
'White' Boys	785
'White' Girls	789
'White' children	1574

Source: Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "A Return of the White and Black Population of the Islands, December 31, 1806", December 31, 1806, *Hodgson Private Papers*, vol. 1, acc. 2210, no. 43.

Although, extending the last point, the majority of those who were enslaved (as recorded in the 1806 enumeration) was composed of adults, children constituted virtually half of this group: 2,755 adults to 2,102 children. The calculations of the slave registration records for 1821, showed 2,582 children against 2,367 adults. Thus children, according to these statistics, composed the majority of the enslaved.²⁹

By 1832, the overall gap between 'whites' and 'blacks' had increased:

Table 29.— 'Black' and 'White' Population, 1832-4

Year	'Black'	'White'	Difference	Population Total
1832	4676	4181	495	8857
1833	4898	4297	601	9195
1834	4559	4289	276	8848

Sources: Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "A Return of the Population", 1832 *Blue Books*, CS/8/1/10 pp. 118-9; Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "A Return of the Population", 1833 *Blue Books*, CS 8/1/11, pp. 118; Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "A Return of the Population", 1834 *Blue Books*, CS/8/1/12 p. 126

It has never been clear whether there was an active attempt to encourage local women to produce more children for the purposes of expanding slave

numbers. Commentators, looking at eighteenth-century records, had noted a large natural increase in the numbers of 'blacks' as opposed to the numbers of 'whites', but only speculated on the cause.³⁰ The locally unpopular Somers Island Company order of the 1670s, forbidding further entries of 'Negroes', would have provided the material incentive for such schemes. Significantly, the cause of this numerical predominance was, above, linked to the legal (or illegal) 'importation' of bondservants.³¹

Free 'Negroes' and 'people of colour' constituted 7% of the 'Negro and Coloured population' in the year 1808, which by that year numbered 5,240. They were also a small 3% of the overall colonial population of 10,038.

Table 30.— 'Free Negroes' (and 'Free Coloureds'), 1806

Parish	Mt. Vernon	St. George	St. Peter	St. John	Total
	27	30	25	65	147
	10	4	17	18	49
	3	3	1	3	10
	3	7	2	9	21
	12	3	13	21	49
	1	1	5	5	12
	6	5	14	12	37
	5	7	12	15	39
	11	1	2	5	19
	78	61	91	153	383

Source: Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "A Return of the White and Black Population of the Islands, December 31, 1806", December 31, 1806, *Hodgson Private Papers*, vol. 1, acc. 2210, no. 43.

From 1821 to 1825, there was a rise in the number of births, and in the number of births over deaths. Outside of the 1824 and 1825 statistics, when the

death rate tripled, there had been a stabilisation and then a lowering of the number of deaths in this group per year:

Table 31.-- The 'Free Black' and 'Free Coloured' Population, 1821-5

<i>Year</i>	Male	Female	Total	Births	Deaths	Natural Increase
<i>1821</i>	229	318	547	12	6	6
<i>1822</i>	231	235	466	18	6	12
<i>1823</i>	242	339	581	14	4	10
<i>1824</i>	251	350	601	13	11	2
<i>1825</i>	260	336	626	8	12	Nil

Source: Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "A Return of the Free Black and Coloured Population in each year as far as the same can be ascertained from January 1821 to the present period", 1821-1825 *Blue Books*, p. 55.

By 1832, the free 'Negro' and free 'coloured' population constituted nearly one fourth of the total 'Negro' and 'Coloured' community. Out of a total 'Negro' and 'coloured' community of 4,676, 1,068 were free before 1834.³² This was 12% out of the whole population: indeed the 'free' population had quadrupled statistically between 1807 and 1832.

The relationship between the declining economic fortunes of Bermuda after 1822 and the rise in manumissions cannot be ignored. The economic depression correlated well with the rise in the number of manumissions recorded in the official records:

**Table 32.— Number of Manumissions.
1821- 1825**

Year	No. of Manumissions
1821	2
1822	5
1823	9
1824	23
1825	21

Source: Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "A Return of the Number of Manumissions Affected by Purchase Bequest or Otherwise from 1st January 1821 to the Present Period", September 24, 1822-March 20, 1833, *Book of the Miscellanies*, book 9, CS/20001/9, p.47

Recorded were those freed by will and by 'gratis' (that is, through the desire of the slave proprietor). Three instances in 1822 describe two men and one woman paying the proprietor £25, £25, and £50 respectively for manumission; and in one instance, during the following year, a free man secured the manumission of his wife, and what was possibly his child, by paying their owner £49 in total.³³

The manumitted were a group anguished over by the colonial government. One example of the depth of this concern occurred during the War of 1812 when 'Negro' and 'Coloured' refugees from the plantations of North America were recognised as free by the British government, and sent to Bermuda. They were to work in the building program at the Dockyard naval establishment; and quite expectedly, they immediately encountered colonial regulations forbidding them "...from entering any Parishes of the Islands with a view to settlement thereon... and to be employed on the works in Ireland Island, as labourers, paid at the same rate as those hired on the Islands with the same rations."³⁴

Apart from the colonial government's security concerns, this measure prevented a new 'black' and free labour class successfully competing with enslaved artisans and their proprietors. Moreover, at the Dockyard, the costs of labour were a source of concern for naval officials; and a later English commentator would recall the metropolitan government's employment of these refugee 'blacks' as an attempt to end the cause of these high costs.³⁵ The commentator finally recalled the successful efforts of the colonial government in having these and other foreign 'free blacks' removed. He conceived it from a notably mid-nineteenth century imperial perspective:

When the Government had no further want of its own freed Negroes as Labourers and Troops, whose presence here was repugnant to the institution and opposed to the interest of the Colonists they were removed to Trinidad, the American Negroes of the Battalions in 1816, and the Floridans in 1822. As there must have been equally strong reasons against planting them on the old colonies in the West Indies, they were sent to Trinidad, which being a more recently conquered territory, was ruled more as a Crown possession, not endowed with legislative rights to the same extent as the old settlements of Barbados, Jamaica etc., to oppose the intention and will of the colonial office.³⁶

But declining economic fortunes meant freedom for certain types of slaves only. Valuable artisan slaves, the 'mechanics', were more often not among the manumitted, and found it difficult to purchase their freedom. Thus, more women than men are among the list of freed, and predictably women outnumbered men within the 'free Negro' and 'free coloured' population. Susette Lloyd had postulated the predominance of women among the manumitted.³⁷ Statistics recorded that out of the thirty-six adult manumissions of the years between 1821 and 1825, twenty-one were manumissions of women, and fifteen were of men.³⁸

Paradoxically, enslaved mechanics, whose labour was also demanded for a variety of projects (such as the building operations at the then newly-installed Royal Naval Dockyard), were the ones most able to meet a basic price of manumission. This led to their prices for manumission being either higher than those for other slaves or made impossible to meet. Lloyd, for example, wrote of the attempt of one man to purchase his freedom. "I know a slave," she wrote, "a religious and well-informed young man, who is a carpenter by trade, and being an excellent workman, can earn one dollar per day- that is, about 100l currency, or 70l per annum. This sum he would take regularly to his owner. As it would of course enable him to maintain himself respectably, he is very anxious to be free and has offered any sum that may be asked, but his master refuses to listen to any terms."³⁹

As Lloyd would further note, men who were mechanics were able to provide for their families respectably as free men, but often impoverished their families when enslaved. She cited particularly the problems of enslaved men married to free women with free children. While the husband's master took his wages and gave her husband the 'surplus', the wife and her children (free, under law if born of her during her freedom), became more dependent on what she was able to earn as a domestic. With the decline of Bermuda's economy, and the equal decline of overseas trading, the hardship could only increase.⁴⁰

'Humanitarian Revolutions' and metropolitan designs

The phrase 'Humanitarian Revolution' was coined by Edward Braithwaite in his classic work *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica*, to describe one group of forces shaping the Jamaican socio-polity. This 'revolution', according to Braithwaite, consisted of "...those movements of and for slave emancipation which had their first significant effects on the Caribbean with the response to the French Revolution in St. Domingue and among the elements of the slave population of the islands generally, along with abolitionist and missionary activity in the area...".⁴¹ It was what Governor William Lumley in 1826 saw as the movement to 'improve' the 'moral, religious and civil condition' of 'Negroes' and 'coloureds'.

Taking the 'religious and moral' aspect of the 'humanitarian revolution', two ideas can be distilled: religious education or instruction; and religious conversion or evangelisation. Religious conversion is self-explanatory: missionary conversion of persons to the Christian faith. Religious education, however, constitutes a broader idea. It incorporates not only evangelisation but instruction in reading and writing, and was part of a need to expand the quality of religious conversions.

Governor John Heydon had advocated religious conversion of slaves as part of his response to the petition of 'Negro' Christians. But it was Bishop George Berkeley who, in 1725, advocated both religious education and religious conversion through his famous Bermuda College proposal. It was clear that Berkeley had *explicitly* intended his Bermuda College for the training of 'Indian' missionaries.⁴² When the proposal was resurrected one hundred years later it was

viewed as part of a project to provide an academic education to members of all races, but particularly to the 'Negro/coloured' populations in the British American colonies. Indeed, there was a clear intention that the new Berkeley plan promoted by the British Anglican minister William Dowding, was aimed at training missionaries for evangelisation on the African continent, along the lines that Berkeley had conceived for North America. But those who objected to the plan did so, *inter alia*, on the basis that 'Negro' academic education had not been intended in Berkeley's conceptualisation of the college:⁴³ the title would seem to support this contention. Yet no mention of excluding 'Negroes' or 'mulattos' was ever made in the proposal; and a group of 'white' philanthropists who established St. Paul's College for 'whites' connected its lineage to the Berkeley plan without bothering to explain how this 'white only' institution followed the basic tenets of Berkeley's proposal.

Nonetheless, Berkeley did outline the type of religious exposure he felt should be given to slaves in Bermuda and in the rest of the plantations in the Americas:

To this may be imputed the small Care that hath been taken to convert the Negroes of our Plantation, who, to the Infamy of *England*, and Scandal of the World, continue Heathen under Christian Masters, and in Christian Countries which could never be, if our Planters were rightly instructed and made sensible, that they disappointed their own Baptism by denying it to those who belong to them: That it would be of Advantage to their Affairs, to have Slaves who should *obey in all Things their Masters according to the Flesh, not with Eye-service as Men-Pleasers, but, in Singleness of Heart as fearing God*: that Gospel liberty consists with temporal servitude; and that their Slaves would only become better Slaves by being Christian.[italics in text]⁴⁴

Thus, in his advocacy for the religious conversion of the slaves he, like Heydon, saw it as potentially improving the quality of the slave. It was clearly not

a liberation theology Berkeley was offering; nor was this the type instruction of the enslaved that would pre-dominate in the era of the 'humanitarian revolutions'.

Several decades later there would be a re-articulation of the 'Berkeleyan line' among members of the metropolitan elite: a call by them for the religious conversion and education of 'Negroes'/slaves in Bermuda. It was in May 1790 when Lieutenant-Governor Henry Hamilton responded to the Bishop of London. The bishop had asked him about the possibilities of the "...religious instruction and conversion of the Negroes."⁴⁵ Hamilton, in his response, proceeded to devote the bulk of his discussion to the 'mechanics', or politics, of providing both instruction and conversion (and especially instruction) to slaves in Bermuda. He felt it was necessary to warn the prelate that one should not expect much enthusiasm for this project among many local 'white' slave proprietors. He pointed out: "[m]any white Inhabitants of these Islands are illiterate as can be conceived, and far behind the greater number of the Negroes... [and] [m]any whites I am persuaded are averse from their servants receiving instruction, least they should be found more ignorant than their slaves."⁴⁶

Hamilton underscored this point by recalling an incident concerning the rector of the St. George's parish church: the churchman had told Hamilton of an encounter he had had with one of his parishioners. The parishioner had warned the him of "...the bad consequences attending the instruction of the Negroes giving for reason that one of his had stolen a spelling book with a desire to teach himself to read."⁴⁷ Hamilton related this story to further underscore the enthusiasm of the 'Negroes' for literacy, an enthusiasm that was part of a general desire of the

'Negroes' for religious instruction; and he cited the example of the growing number of 'Negroes' attending religious lectures and services:

Upon the delivery from the pulpit of Mr [William] Duke's lectures the Negroes attended to the number of about four scores, whereas on Sundays at morning service their number did not usually exceed 10, 12, 15, 20 and I am certain has never in any time exceeded 24.⁴⁸

What was needed, implied the governor, was a structure for the provision of this education; and this structured education had to be of a nature which would reduce the hostility of local 'white' slave proprietors, demonstrating to them the benefits of a religious education program for their slaves. Echoing Bishop Berkeley, Hamilton argued: "... if a humane and sensible attention was pay'd to the Negroes, they would be grateful for it, be better servants, and happier men...". But religious education had to apply to both 'black' and 'white':

The conversion of the Negroes (in my opinion) depends first on the conversion of their masters... If any opinion can have any weight the chief attention of all well disposed persons should be applied to the education of the youth Black and white.⁴⁹

Yet the establishment of organised and consistent religious educational structures for 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' in Bermuda would begin in 1808, with the Methodists and the ministry of Reverend Joshua Marsden. It was the result of the emphasis placed on 'Negro' religious education by Dr. Thomas Coke. Coke, elected president of the Methodist Conference in 1799, advocated the establishment of religious institutions devoted entirely to the education of 'Negroes' and 'Coloureds', bond and free. But Coke had an indifferent attitude to slavery.⁵⁰ He dispatched missionaries to the Caribbean, with orders not to interfere with the operations of the colonial government, either in word or deed, and to avoid criticisms of the institution of slavery. Religious salvation and instruction

were to be the principal concerns of missionaries and religious teachers. Yet the first missionary sent under the Coke presidency would become entangled in a conflict with the local colonial elite which virtually wrecked the Methodists' plans for Bermuda.

Political Revolutions

Two years after Henry Hamilton expressed his opinions about religious education in Bermuda, he was reading a petition sent him by Captain Andrew Durnford, and Royalist refugee-merchant Bridger Goodrich. It was on behalf of the whole Governor's Council. Captain Durnford had been, for over several years of Hamilton's government, engaged in the rebuilding of the colonial fortifications. These activities were originally in anticipation of a North American attack, though by the time of the petition, the list of enemies had come to include the French Jacobins. This time, however, Durnford's concerns went beyond his specific employment as Royal Engineer, and touched on those general questions of internal security.

Some of the complaints in the petition re-articulated traditional concerns. There was an old Norden exaggeration: "... the Negroe Slaves greatly exceed the White People in Number...". But it went on to declare that "...the Accounts of the Insurrections, Depredations and Murders committed by negroes, at St. Domingo..." had produced "...a very manifest alteration... in the Behaviour of the negroes here, which together with their frequently assembling in large Bodies in the night time, have occasioned great apprehension in many of the Principal Inhabitants respecting their own safety, as well as the safety of the Community."⁵¹

The petitioners made the point that the 'Negroes', whom Hamilton had felt were more advanced than many in their own racial caste, were a "... very hardy and Intelligent Race of Negroes...", and "... constitute the principal Efficient Strength of these Islands...". Thus, at some point, far from using their skills in the way Hamilton envisioned, they would use them to remove 'white' and British authority from the islands. It had been merely several years ago, they added, that the 'Negroes' were engaged in conspiracy toward those ends.⁵² They finally made a plea that some militia, even the 47th Regiment (which they conceived as deficient), be sent: this had been promised by the British government.

When Captain Durnford himself had occasion to write to the Duke of Richmond in February 1792, he repeated (often word for word) some of these concerns. But he was more sanguine, both about the 47th Regiment and the existing state of security. "Yet", he continued, "as there is no knowing what Impressions these Accounts [of the events in Saint Domingue], may have made in the Minds of the Negroes, who compose the real Strength of the Island, and they of late, having been known to assemble at Night in large Bodies, contrary to their usual custom, creates additional Suspicion with respect to their Intentions."⁵³ The focus of concern was toward attempting to kill feelings of confidence among 'Negroes' and 'Coloureds': that the violent insurgency executed in Saint-Domingue could be carried out successfully in Bermuda. Toward that end, discussion revolved around expanding the military in the colony. There was, therefore, the approval of troops for Bermuda. Moreover, at the most strategic of the forts, the King's Castle Fort, guarding so-called 'Castle Roads' (a major channel into the islands), twenty armed 'white' labourers were to be stationed.⁵⁴

Regarding the more psychological elements, in the aim of lowering 'black' and 'coloured' political confidence, Durnford was hopeful:

The Embodying of the Militia in sufficient Numbers, considering the Poverty of the People...[it] is liable to serve, would have been a great hardship upon Individuals, without Pay and Provisions, and as this Step, would have given an immediate Alarm to the Negroes, and perhaps precipitated any Measures they may have in Agitation, such a Number of the Militia would have become necessary to assemble together, as would have rendered it very expensive, and create an Appearance of Danger, which in a little time, will I hope blow over, particularly, if the Negroes and People of Colour at St. Domingo, should receive any considerable Check.⁵⁵

Durnford was to be disappointed in this latter expectation. When he wrote in July 1793 to the Duke of Richmond, he was giving his version of more recent happenings in Saint-Domingue, as he received them from refugees captured by Bermudian privateersmen. "A schooner Prize," he wrote, "having been sent in a few days ago, with some French Prisoners aboard, have given Information of fresh Troubles at the Cape, by which means great part of the Town has been burn't...". The ensuing battle between factions provided, as he put it, "... an opportunity to the Negroes and other Banditti to plunder and burn the greatest part of the Town."⁵⁶

Later, in June 1793 the Commissioner appointed by the French Directorate, Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, was to have difficulty enforcing his mandate upon his arrival in Cap François. Many of the 'whites' refused to recognise it, and set about attacking large numbers of the 'mulattoes' in the city. The Commissioner requested the armies of 'Negro' insurgents in the hinterland to assist him in crushing the rioting. He promised French recognition of general emancipation, the already *de facto* situation in much of the territory. As these

'black' forces began to invade the city, many of the 'whites' began to flee the colony for France.⁵⁷

Other Bermuda proprietors were also very directly informed and influenced by the events in Saint-Domingue. Among the flood of émigrés from the French colony was Felix Carteau. Carteau was from St. Marc, and at the outset of the mass flight had been packing his belongings on an Italian vessel, the *L'Esperanza*. While enroute to France, the vessel was captured by a Bermuda privateersman, and sent to the Vice Admiralty prize courts in Bermuda. Carteau, however, was given room and board by Bridger Goodrich, whose privateer sloops were also preying upon the shipping of Saint-Domingue/France. Bridger Goodrich had purchased, by then, the imposing mansion of Bridge House, previously owned by Governor William Popple.

Carteau engaged with the 'whites' in Bermuda on various topics that had, as their core, the developments in Saint-Domingue. These conversations became part of his book, written in dialogue, which he called *Soirées Bermudiennes*. It was a presentation to the French revolutionary government of what he felt was cause of the collapse of the French faction in Saint-Domingue. Accepting that the dialogues were authentic, they give an idea of how a prosperous caste of Bermudians viewed the unfolding drama in the French Caribbean island. It is of no small significance that Bridger Goodrich received Carteau's tale with some degree of horror. It does not leave one too much room to wonder how much of his privateering, and that of the others, went toward giving the 'Negroes' and 'people of colour' in that territory the 'check' Durnford had hoped. What is of no small significance, Carteau wrote of Goodrich as declaring: "If you want to return to St.

Domingue and there side with us, I take it upon myself to return you and your family [to the island]."⁵⁸

More to the point, the Saint-Domingue revolt was hardening colonial elite attitudes against any liberal changes to the 'customs of the country' in Bermuda. This hardening process would occur less than a decade before the first attempts at missionary work among the 'Negro' and 'Coloured' populations.

Conclusion

The final comment on the effect of the Saint-Domingue revolt on local attitudes underscores one of the difficulties facing nineteenth-century radical resistance. Changes in the local demography meant that Bermuda was no longer, numerically speaking, 'a white man's country'. Moreover, the majority of these 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' were enslaved. There was, thus, a large bulk of Bermuda's population necessarily in a position to be inspired by any successful local or overseas revolt.

The difficult economic times, among other things, made possible the acquisition of freedom, and the first march for some along the road, they hoped, to equality. Along this road would follow metropolitan fellow travellers, inspired by the liberalism of the 'humanitarian revolution'. All of these intentions would clash with a political climate heightened by servile revolution in the Caribbean, and fears of its effects in Bermuda. Thus, the body of the 'customs of the country' was more than just a pompous indulgence as far as many local proprietors were

concerned. It was conceived as the barrier between their society and revolutionary Saint-Domingue.

Endnotes: Chapter VII

¹ Susette Harriet Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda* (London: James Cochrane, 1834), pp. 29-30.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

³ See Hilary Beckles, "Caribbean Anti-slavery: the Self-liberation Ethos of Enslaved Blacks", *Journal of Caribbean History*, 22:1 and 2 (1988), passim; Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American slave revolts in the making of the modern world* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), passim.

⁴ *Bermuda Royal Gazette*, January 21, 1834.

⁵ *Private Acts, 1704-94*, pp. 83-4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁹ Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, pp. 67-8.

¹⁰ *Acts of Assembly, 1755-99*, p. 116.

¹¹ *Bermuda Gazette*, November 11, 1826, p. 39.

¹² Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 178.

¹³ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, *Bound Manuscript Acts, 1819-34*, no. 24, p. 321.

¹⁴ *Bermuda Gazette*, August 31, 1799.

¹⁵ *Acts of the House of Assembly, 1755-99*, p. 301.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 304-5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

¹⁹ *Bound Manuscript Acts*, no. 24, p. 321.

²⁰ Henry C. Wilkinson, *Bermuda from Sail to Steam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 194.

²¹ Jean Kennedy, *Biography of a Colonial Town: Hamilton, Bermuda, 1790-1897* (Hamilton, Bermuda: Bermuda Book Stores, 1961), p. 98.

²² Olwyn M. Blouet, "Governor Reid in Post-Emancipation Bermuda, 1839-46: an advocate of social and economic change", *Journal of Caribbean History*, vol. 9, (May 1977), p. 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4; Wilkinson, *Bermuda from Sail to Steam*, pp. 449-52.

²⁴ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "Return of the Population", 1834, CS8/1/12, p. 119.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-9.

²⁶ Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, p. 217.

²⁷ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "A Return of the White and Black Population of the Islands, December 31, 1806", December 31, 1806, *Hodgson Private Papers*, vol. 1, acc. 2214, no. 43.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 43.

²⁹ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, *Slave Registration List, 1821*, passim. This number excludes 57 whose ages were not given. Also the population total itself was 5,242 and not 5,006. This would leave 236 not counted. Nonetheless, if the numbers are adjusted to include the 236 in the adult population, one would have 2,582 children, 2,603 adults respectively, still suggesting a substantial number of enslaved children. See Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 67.

³⁰ Crane, "The Socioeconomics of a Female Majority", p. 234. Crane did not express disagreement with the view of one commentator (Robert Wells), whom she paraphrased as arguing that "...a higher black fertility rate rather than slave importation was responsible for the disproportionate rate of growth among blacks." This view, of course, is compatible with the general 'optimistic' perspective on Bermudian slavery, and should be seen within that context. Crane, as noted, had expressed that optimism. See *ibid.*, p. 244.

³¹ See *Memorials of Bermuda*, II, pp. 404, 422; see also, Chapter II: "The Broader Contemporary Context, 1700-1764".

³² Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 81.

³³ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "A Return of the Number of Manumissions Affected by Purchase Bequest or Otherwise from 1st January 1821 to the Present Period", September 24, 1822-March 20, 1833, *Book of the Miscellanies*, book 9, CS/20001/9, p. 47.

³⁴ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 51.

³⁵ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "History of the Naval Establishment, Bermuda" ms, p. 307.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

- ³⁷ Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, p. 99.
- ³⁸ "A Return of the number of Manumissions", *Book of the Miscellanies*, p. 47.
- ³⁹ Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, pp. 98-9.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- ⁴¹ Edward Braithwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. xiv.
- ⁴² George Berkeley, *A Proposal for the Better Supplying of Churches in Our Foreign Plantations, and for Converting the Savage Americans to Christianity, by a College to be erected in the Summer Islands. Otherwise called the Isles of Bermuda* (Dublin: George Grierson, 1725), p. 16.
- ⁴³ S. Brownlow Gray, *The Revival of Bishop Berkeley's Bermuda College: a letter to his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England &c. &c. &c. On of the vice -patrons of the scheme on the plan which had been lately promulgated with the above title* (London: Whittaker, 1853), pp. 21-2.
- ⁴⁴ Berkeley *A Proposal*, p. 191.
- ⁴⁵ Letter of Henry Hamilton to the Bishop of London, Fulham Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, vol. 17, pp. 51-4.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-4.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-4.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-4.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-4. The reference to Mr. Duke is to the Barbadian Anglican priest the Reverend William Duke.
- ⁵⁰ Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries: the disintegration of Jamaican slave society, 1787-1834* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1982), p. 9.
- ⁵¹ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "Petition to Henry Hamilton, Governor of Bermuda", January 17, 1792, *Papers of Andrew Durnford*, acc. 263, 264, small book no. 3.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "Letter of Andrew Durnford to the Duke of Richmond", February 11, 1792, *Papers of Andrew Durnford*, acc. 263, 264, small book no. 1.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "Letter of Andrew Durnford to the Duke of Richmond", July 15, 1792, *Papers of Andrew Durnford*, acc. 263, 264, small book no. 1.
- ⁵⁷ Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, passim.
- ⁵⁸ "Si vous voulez reprendre le chemin de St. Domingue, et y faire cause commune avec nous, je me charge de faire revenir votre famille auprès de vous." Free translation. Felix Carteau, *Soirées Bermudiennes ou Entretiens sur les événements qui ont opéré la ruine de la partie Française de L'île Saint-Domingue* (Bordeaux: Pellicier, 1802/an. X), pp. 253-4.

Chapter VIII
'Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood':
the Politics of Radical Resistance,
1800-1834

Dramatis Personae

Statistics on Bermuda's free 'blacks' and free 'coloureds' give a 'macroscopic' view of that population; yet something of a microscopic view is needed, beyond the case studies given by Susette Lloyd, which would explain more clearly why the 'customs of the country' were viewed as obnoxious. Thus what follows is much of the same type of description as undertaken in chapter VI. It will constitute tiny biographical sketches of those 'blacks' and 'coloureds' who directly or indirectly sought radical change.

One begins with a petition submitted to the colonial government by a group of thirty-eight free 'blacks' and 'persons of colour' in January 1834. The context of this petition included the debates and legislative meetings concerned with the constitution of the post-abolition society. The thirty-eight petitioners were seeking the removal of all legal 'disabilities' that had heretofore governed their lives and fortunes: "Your Petitioners... most humbly pray that they may soon be relieved from the various disabilities and invidious distinctions to which they have hitherto been subjected, and may be admitted to the enjoyment of the rights and privileges which ought to be possessed in a state of Freedom."¹

Fourteen of the thirty-eight men who signed the petition were freeholders, and their names topped the list. Some had attained freedom since 1828, and a few of them had achieved it through the 'surpluses' of their artisan wages.

Thomas Fox, Sr., who was at the summit of the 1834 list of petitioners, had it recorded in the document that he was a freeholder and a senior branch pilot. Yet he began the nineteenth century as the enslaved pilot of St. David's comptroller William Smith. Fox secured his manumission in July 1818 after he contracted to pay a stipulated amount per month for the maintenance of the sick enslaved boy owned by Smith. This arrangement was to continue until the boy's demise.² As early as 1821, three years after his own manumission, Fox was recorded in the *Slave Registration List* as possessing three bondservants: a forty-two year old 'coloured' woman named Marian; and two 'coloured' girls, named Mary and Ursulla.³ He acquired two more 'coloured' children, Nancy and Dinah, by the final year of slavery.⁴ It is probable that the group of his slaves constituted a family, though little evidence supports this point.

Another major freeholder among those who signed the petition was the shipbuilder and whaler James Athill. Athill had been born in Antigua in 1788. He arrived in Bermuda in 1807 when he was nineteen years of age. Yet, his formative years, presumably all in Antigua, would have been spent in a colony noted for its entrepreneurial 'blacks' (bond and free), and a strong artisan tradition among the bondservants.⁵ Upon arrival in Bermuda, he learnt and mastered the trade of shipbuilding and seems to have achieved manumission by 1821.⁶ He was middle-aged when he established a financially successful whaling business.⁷ Athill ventured into shipbuilding, and established a shipyard in the town of St. George's

where he (and the bulk of the free 'black' and 'coloured' population) resided; and notably after 1834, he was recorded as producing sizeable vessels, particularly for the North Atlantic routes. It was in Athill's shipyard that the *Agnes*, a 131 ton schooner, and the *James*, a 203 ton vessel, were built for the merchant James Musson. Of one of his ships, the *London Packet*, launched in 1836, it was written: "The beautiful style in which she entered the water was, we hope, but an augury of the successful and lengthy race she will run thereon."⁸ When it became necessary for the colonial government to know the value of the property and personal assets of free 'Negroes' and 'Coloureds', Athill was recorded as owning, in 1835, £500 worth of house and landed property.⁹ By 1837, the shipbuilder had assets worth £1440 in total; but a post-emancipation decline in shipbuilding provided one context for the diminishing value of his assets.

His post-emancipation involvement in the construction of an educational infrastructure for 'black/coloureds' was probably more influential than his business concerns. The establishment of a variety of 'black/Coloured' schools had, as will be noted, begun long before the end of slavery. A library to serve these institutions was deemed needed. Thus, a group of 'blacks/Coloureds' established, in 1843, the "Library for the Dissemination of Useful Knowledge." Several men served as agents for the library in the various parishes; and Athill served as its agent in St. George's. Kenneth Robinson reproduced in his book *Heritage* a press release, composed in part by Athill, which set out its aims:

'...an institution... undertaken by the Coloured people for their mutual improvement and advancement in educational subjects... furnishing it with such Works as shall be best suited to the capacities of our people and most likely to lead them on (and particularly our youth) to intelligence and usefulness, and we trust that, in conjunction with our Schools will be the means to remedying that educational deficiency which his so evident, and deplorable in the history of our people.'¹⁰

But James Athill represented (like Thomas Fox) a growing, post-1764 contradiction within the 'black' and 'coloured' caste: a contradiction, that is, between a more privileged group of free 'blacks' and 'coloureds' on one side, and the masses of 'black' and 'coloured' bondservants on the other. Athill was a slave proprietor. He owned, in 1821, a twenty-seven year old African caulker/carpenter named Gray. Gray was, then, his only bondservant, probably employed in his burgeoning shipbuilding business. This was more certainly so in 1830 and 1833-4, when the then middle-aged African was enumerated in the lists of those two years. By 1830 and 1834, Athill had acquired several more bondservants. He obtained two thirteen-year old boys (Jack and Joe), as well as a sixteen-year old 'black' girl named Emma. He also acquired another sixteen year old, a 'coloured' boy named Andrew, by 1833-4. All of the teenage boys, to quote the notations in Athill's 1830 and 1833-4 entries, were "...employed at the carpenter's business...":¹¹ they were, that is hired out by Athill. The girl, who was a young woman of nineteen by the time of the final slave list compilation (and is listed as a servant) was plausibly employed at the household of the shipbuilder. Indeed, his domestic economy seemed to reflect three ways in which bondservants were employed: for personal and household duties, as wage earners, and as unwaged labour at the proprietor's business.¹²

It is not clear whether members of the small and endangered pre-1764 'free' black and 'coloured' population owned bondservants. The complaints of their collusion with slaves, their numerical insignificance, and the constant threat of purging would have made this difficult in those years. But ambitions for social precedence and respectability in an American society was seen by many colonists as easily facilitated by the ownership of slaves. Plausibly, after 1800 at least, some members of the slowly expanding caste of free 'black' and 'coloured' inhabitants were drawing the same conclusion; and for some (but clearly and significantly not most) the ownership of slaves would constitute a political attitude central to nineteenth-century radicalism: paradoxically, it was part of the 'politics of emulation'.

Another supporter of the 1834 petition was James Stowe, Sr., who classified himself in the document as one of the freeholders. He was a butcher who had established a stall in the city of Hamilton by 1838. His house and landed property were valued at £200 collectively each year between 1834 and 1838; and in 1834, his total property value was estimated at £350.¹³

But Richard Williams seems to have been the wealthiest of the signatories, at least in the year of 1835. His house and landed property were assessed that year at £700 and his total property worth £915.¹⁴ The value of the property of four of the men who signed the 1834 petition can be shown for the year of 1835:

Table 33.-- Assessed Wealth of Four Free 'Black' and 'Coloured' Petitioners (1835)

<i>Petitioners</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Parish</i>
Richard Williams	915	storekeeper	Pembroke
James Athill	720	shipbuilder	St. George's
James Stowe	330*	butcher	St. George's
James Esten Forbes	80	warden/king's pilots	St. George's

Source: Kenneth Robinson, *Heritage: including an account of Bermudian builders, pilots, and petitioners of the earliest post abolition period 1834- 1859* (London: Macmillan, 1979, 1985), pp. 72-82.

*@ £350 in 1834.

Beyond the petitioners, other notable free 'blacks' emerge in the period between 1800 and 1834. One can begin with the freeholders. Two of this group had achieved their freedom in the early 1800s, and were notable in their connection with Methodist missionaries: Succo Tucker and his daughter Sally Succo Tucker. Sally Tucker may, in fact, have been born free. Succo Tucker had been born in 1744, possibly in Smiths parish, where he spent his more prominent years; he was, therefore, a teenager during the years of the Conspiracy of 1761.¹⁵ His first name is notable given the questions of 'Gold Coast' importation of slaves, suspected as having occurred during the 1700s: it is phonetically parallel to the name of a 'Gold Coast' slave-trading city of Socco.¹⁶ It seems likely that if Succo Tucker was not himself from the 'Gold Coast', he was of 'Gold Coast' heritage.

Succo Tucker seems to have been the slave of Richard Peniston, accepting the veracity of John Stephenson's assertions.¹⁷ He was at the very least renting a portion of Peniston's land between 1788 and 1800 as a free 'Negro': he was listed

among the group of free 'blacks' leasing or renting land in an enumeration quoted earlier.¹⁸ Yet, by his death in 1812, he had become a freeholder of a portion of this land, located in Smiths parish; and he seems to have turned his home into a small tavern, providing, according to Cyril Packwood, refreshment for travellers *en route* through the 'Country'.¹⁹ His daughter seems to have secured ownership of the house. Susette Lloyd, who had once made an unannounced call on Sally Succo Tucker one evening in 1830, recalled: "She is... famous for her delicious syllabubs; and as her little cottage lies among the most romantic scenery, every one makes a point of paying her a visit."²⁰ Perhaps the former incarnation of the house as a place of rest and refreshment further explains why her syllabubs would be so well known, and persons would feel themselves free to drop in and request them.

Nonetheless, Sally Tucker was notable for more than just 'delicious syllabubs': she seems to have been among the more prominent members of the Methodist movement in Bermuda. As Susette Lloyd remembered, Mrs. Succo Tucker or Mrs. Succo as she was occasionally referred to in the documents, operated or 'kept' a Sunday school for 'coloured' children. It, in 1832, was recorded as instructing eleven boys and twenty five girls, under the financial patronage of the 'Ladies Society for the Education of Negroes' based in England. This support took the form of paying a small stipend to Sally Tucker: of £10 in 1832, and £7 in 1834.²¹ The school itself was located near the old Smith's Parish church, and both the school and Mrs. Tucker seemed to have impressed Susette Lloyd. Lloyd described it as an "... an admirable Sunday School..."; and of Tucker,

she continued: "Mistress Socco, besides ranking very high as a teacher, is a good-hearted dame, and her yellow face is always lighted up by a smile."²²

But perhaps the most significant non-signatory to the petition was the 'coloured' Methodist minister and slave Edward Fraser. Fraser was born in Barbados in 1798, the bondsman of Bermudian Francis Lightbourn. Lightbourn, who had been residing in Barbados, returned to his home in Paget, Bermuda in 1818; and he brought his twenty-year old bondsman with him. Yet, before their arrival in Bermuda, Fraser had become literate and (as he once wrote of himself in a letter to the Methodist Society in England) exposed himself to the rudiments of religious faith.²³ "He received no education, but in the house of his master and mistress...", James Christie Esten once said him, "... and yet he has made himself master of the first six books of Euclid; has read the writings of Locke, and of most of the standard divines of the Church of England...".²⁴

Fraser recalled that he had become interested in the Methodist movement in Bermuda, in part the result of a desire to find persons with similar interests in religious topics. Indeed, as he told it, he was very much alone in Bermuda, "... finding no companions and no church service on some Sundays." He continued: "...I sought comfort only in the secret exercises of religion; and a sorrow, partly worldly, soon became entirely a godly one."²⁵ He began to meet with a Methodist group in the city of Hamilton, and from there his involvement in the Methodist movement expanded.²⁶

During the 1820s Fraser noted the need of the growing number of 'black' and 'coloured' Methodists from Paget-Warwick for a more permanent ministry than that had been heretofore offered them. He was appointed leader of this

entirely 'black' and 'coloured' group in 1821. He remained in the position until 1829.²⁷ But Fraser was still a slave, and his servile duties for Francis Lightbourn interfered with his ministerial responsibilities. Thus, permission was sought on his behalf for his manumission, which Lightbourn granted on January 22, 1828. After 1829, he left Bermuda to begin his overseas ministry work on behalf of the Methodists.²⁸ He was, therefore, not in Bermuda when the 1834 petition was written and submitted.

Fraser had worked as a clerk, assisting, as he put it, in Lightbourn's "...new and considerable mercantile transactions."²⁹ There seems to have been an increase in the clerical employment of 'blacks' in the 1800s, bond and free. Indeed, proprietors who owned bondsmen like Fraser (that is, bondservants literate from childhood) had access to a cheap source of secretarial labour. One free 'black' clerk was associated with the petition of 1834: one of the non-freeholders among the group. His name was William Burrell, and he served as the office keeper for Colonial Secretary Robert Kennedy, from November 8, 1827 to August 8, 1832.³⁰ His occupation may have provided petitioners with the expertise of one who would have been intimately familiar with government practice and protocol; and indeed, he may have been the individual who composed the 1834 petition.

Burrell had replaced another free 'black' Daniel Mallory, the latter having died in office in 1827. Mallory was a prominent Methodist and 'black' freeholder linked to Joshua Marsden, and had previously preached to the 'black' Paget-Warwick Methodists before Edward Fraser's organisation of that mission in 1821.³¹ It was in relation to his predecessor that something of Burrell's petitioning style emerges. Burrell had, one year before the free 'black' and 'coloured'

document was written, submitted his own petition to Governor Stephen Chapman. He complained about a portion of his salary as office keeper not paid him, but transferred to the widow of Daniel Mallory. He pointed out that unlike the Mallorys, he had to live on the premises where he worked.³² His attempt, however, to gain compensation failed as the governor referred the matter to the Executive Council. Only Burrell's late employer, Robert Kennedy, supported the complaint: the other members of the Council, including James Christie Esten, rejected it.³³ When Burrell signed his name to the petition of 1834, he recorded his occupation simply as a 'planter': it underscored the variety of occupations he and other 'blacks' performed in this new era of slavery.

I. Radical Resistance. 1800-1834

Religious conversion, the Stephenson debacle, and the Marsden compromise: first volleys in the radicalisation of the 'Berkeleyan line'

Irish missionary John Stephenson was selected by the Methodist Conference in 1799 to evangelise in Bermuda. He arrived in the colony on May 10 of that year, and travelled around, preaching at various places. "In the course of my travelling and labours in Bermuda", he later outlined in a letter of defence to Governor George Beckwith, "I preach for the most part every day, and twice at least on the Sabbath, Somerset one Sabbath, Brackish pond and Sockers, Harris' bay the other Sabbath...After I have preached at 10 or Eleven in the forenoon, then at 4 in the afternoon...".³⁴

Immediately, the link with local 'Negro' Methodists emerges. 'Sockers' was Succo Tucker who had undertaken the task of organising meetings between local 'Negro' converts and the missionary. Tucker provided a meeting place for Stephenson and the 'Negro' congregation at his home in Smiths Parish (also called Harris' Bay Parish), land which at the time he had been renting from Richard Peniston. Peniston was also the Justice of the Peace for Smiths parish, and it seems did not hinder these meetings. He, like other 'white' proprietors, seems then not to have viewed Stephenson as a problem: and this was probably representative of the earliest views the colonial proprietary class had of the Methodist missionary. By the time Stephenson ran into difficulties, he had been in Bermuda for close to six months.³⁵

According to Stephenson, his message to the 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' was harmless enough. Indeed, as presented to Beckwith, it was an even more conservative version of the 'Berkeleyan line' that Governor Heydon would not have found scandalous. It did not avoid the issue of slavery, but in fact underscored the moral and religious obligation slaves had to their proprietors. He wrote in one of his letters to Governor Beckwith: "I exhorted them to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to their own Masters and Mistresses and requested they might let their Masters and Mistresses see by their obedience and fidelity that they were the better of what they heard...". He added defiantly: "if any man can prove any thing to the contrary of this, let me be dealt with according to the Law- if I have broke the Laws of England, or if there be an Act in Bermuda prohibiting preaching at 6 or 7 of the Clock to either white or black and this Law appear to me I shall immediately desist..."³⁶

This, of course, underscores several points about this new era of resistance. Principal of these, Stephenson assiduously sought to justify himself through the laws of England. Indeed, his complaint about colonial assembly regulations against him was that they flew in the face of English constitutional principles: that the colonists and Beckwith were behaving, through their restrictions, against the English constitution. He conceived his exhortations as designed to encourage slaves to better and more faithful service to their proprietors and the colonial/metropolitan regime. His movement was thus not to be a revised version of the Conspiracy of 1761. "But people are afraid I will turn the blacks against the whites", he wrote in a later letter to Beckwith, "... What could I promise myself (an old man) from such proceedings. What did I ever see in the blacks (who was a

perfect stranger to them) to destroy the people of my own Colour...I do not believe there is a white man living even the wickedest, would' ever think of planning, Or laying out a scheme for blacks to destroy the whites. It appears to me Sir, against nature or if there could be such a man found what could he promise himself, could he expect the blacks would allow him to be their Governor, if they had a Nation to themselves, Your Excellency must see the absurdity of such a thought."³⁷

Although it is more suggested than stated explicitly, the offending meeting may have occurred around December 1799. As Stephenson told of the origins of the meeting: "...though I was wearied after the labours of the day Socker came into the room and said Sir, there are a few of my Colour would wish you to give them a word of Exhortation, to which I complied not thinking any would make evil of it, this I have done twice or thrice..."³⁸

But it was probably less ironic than expected that Stephenson's troubles should begin with his meetings in Smiths parish during the winter of 1799-1800. Smiths was the parish in which John Vickers was alleged to have heard conspirators over thirty years before Stephenson's arrival.³⁹ Nonetheless, suspicions arose, and a number of complaints lodged, resulting in a meeting of the Smiths parish vestry on January 30, 1800. Parishioners sought to consider the implications of "...certain meetings in the said Parish, of white People and Negroes on Sundays and Sunday evenings for the purposes of severally attending the Lectures or discourses of a Mr. Stephenson..."⁴⁰ The complaint focused principally on two 'transgressions': lectures that were "...intentionally meant by the said Stephenson to be Addressed to the Negroes, after the departure of his white Audience..."; and what they vaguely recalled as "...his behaviour to and

manner of conversing with the said Negroes on such occasions... (present Circumstances considered)...". This behaviour was pronounced to be "...improper and reprehensible..." and "... it is apprehended that many evils may finally result from meetings so held and thus conducted, more especially at this eventful period."⁴¹ The latter remark was an obvious reference to the events in Saint-Domingue. Stephenson would later complain of accusations against Methodists lodged by Bermudians: that Methodists were "... 'formentors of rebellion and abettors of the French Revolution.'"⁴²

Stephenson's version of events pointed to two particular complaints not mentioned in the petition. A day after the meeting, January 31, 1800, he wrote his version in a letter to Beckwith. The missionary did not deal directly with complaints on how he behaved with the members of his 'Negro' congregation, or the allegation that he waited until the 'whites' had left before speaking about other things at his meetings. He may not have been aware of these accusations until later, and, in fact, does address them in his second letter to Beckwith. What he had heard about was the fear (not mentioned at all in the petition) that he was exhorting by candle-light. While certain Smiths parishioners were unhappy about this, they may have been aware that it gave them little legal grounds for complaint.

Moreover, one suspects that the real cause of the complaint about these meetings was that they were held at Succo Tucker's house, a private dwelling, more or less beyond their official reach. This point seems to explain a statement Stephenson made in his letter to Beckwith: of a "...Dominion... who will to prohibit me from entering into any of his Subjects houses who are pleased to

invite me, and to give such instructions as I am capable of consistent with the Laws of God and man...".⁴³

But the issue over the timing of his meetings gave the missionary an opportunity to take the high ground supported by the mores of a slave society. "Sir," he wrote, "I am acquainted with the people called Methodists for upwards of thirty years, and except in the Summer days, I have heard more preaching with Candle light than with day light, the reason why Mr. Wesley and all his preachers knew that buisness was generally over at 6 or 7 of the Clock and then all labourers and Servants could attend preaching without hindering buisness, and your Excellency knows and every reasonable man will allow it was better every way for men to be employed in the worship of God than perhaps in folly, Idleness or other excesses, nor were we ever prohibited."⁴⁴

He, again, dared anyone to support the charge that he preached in a way which undermined the established laws of the crown and Parliament, and significantly, not a single individual ever tried to argue that he *preached* sedition. At a later meeting between the magistrate John Green (a fellow Irishman) and the missionary John Stephenson, the 'conspiracy theory' was not brought up again. This meeting concerned the more radical implications of his behaviour to 'blacks' than any intentional plot to 'destroy the whites'.

It was in his own remarks on the matter, expressed on February 15, 1800, that Beckwith does not even argue the view of Stephenson inciting the 'Negroes': the purpose of his address was to find restrictions to place on the missionary. Stephenson, again, used every opportunity to demonstrate that Methodists were not intent on undermining the integrity of state power, local or metropolitan. He

reminded the governor that Beckwith himself had occasion to comment that "...Mr. Wesley and his people were always peaceable and loyal Subjects..."; and he exhorted Beckwith, in words spiritually repetitive of Heydon's 1669 proclamation, that "...no man can be a Rebel and Christian, and no man can be a Christian and a disturber of the peace of Nations families or neighbours."⁴⁵ He also confronted lingering mythologies about how Methodist Protestant Irish behaved in the rebellions in Ireland through this vignette:

... we were the most honoured people in all Ireland in the time of Rebellion, though that Law was enacted, if any number of men should be found together exceeding 2 or 3 any common Soldier might fire upon them if they did not immediately disperse, or give a proper account of themselves. We were authorised to hold our conference in Dublin as long as we pleased, though at that time the Rebel army was within two Miles of the City, and men that bore the name of Gentlemen were a hanging in the City for their rebellious conduct, when reconnoitring parties would go through the Country and would hear there were Methodists lived in such and such places, the Gentlemen would say we have nothing to fear from them they are peaceable people.⁴⁶

John Green met with Stephenson on Monday February 10, fifteen days before Beckwith was to meet with the Legislative Council, to present two fresh complaints: that the missionary had criticised the motives and ministries of Anglican clerics; and that he had violated rules of behaviour governing relations between 'whites' and 'blacks'.⁴⁷ Touching on the first, Stephenson replied that since he had been merely quoting scripture when the alleged criticism was made, his accusers should be blamed for applying it to the behaviour of the local clergy. Regarding the second, Justice Green was recorded by Henry Wilkinson as informing the missionary that the bondservants in Bermuda were "... 'kindly and humanely dealt with'...". Stephenson apparently agreed with him, but declared that this point was irrelevant to this purpose: his purpose was to 'save souls'. It

was then, according to Wilkinson, that Green upbraided the missionary for what both Green and Wilkinson characterised as 'social innovations': his more intimate interaction with the 'Negroes, and in particular, his shaking their hands. As Green declared, in more poetic language: "'A good start once made and the avalanche could quickly follow.'"⁴⁸ As stated above, from the proprietors' collective viewpoint, these 'strange' regulations and prejudices (pillar regulations in the 'customs of the country') had long since become more than just pompous indulgences: they were, in the era of republican revolutions, what kept a 'hardy and intelligent race of Negroes' from taking control of the colony. They filled the trenches between the Bermuda slave society and revolutionary Saint-Domingue.

Stephenson, however, saw things differently. He explained, in his second letter to Beckwith, that "...of these new Charges Sir, I shook hands with the blacks, yes, after I exhorted them to become real Christians, by turning from all evil and against that great evil Polygamy... and [to give] Evidence to their Masters and Mistresses by their obedience and honesty, and by not giving bad answers, but to be kind and courteous that they were the better of what they heard from me." He added: "The Creatures would come forward and bow and Courtsy, and return me thanks- and to encourage them in ways of God, I was too much the Gentleman and too much the Christian not to shake hands with them and bow to them too. The Reverend Mr. Wesley, and the Reverend Doctor Coke, some of the best bred Gentlemen, would not only shake hands but kiss the poorest of their people."⁴⁹

Thus, Stephenson did not take this complaint seriously. Indeed, he conceived that what he violated under this head were unimportant customs; and he devalued them against the standard of more important religious principles and

constitutional indulgences. Stephenson violated, that is, the 'customs of the country' in favour of universal precepts: "...but please Your Excellency," he wrote to Beckwith, "are not these weighty matters, are not these charges worth troubling the Chief Magistrate with and especially as no man warned me of it... In my Country the Justice for the Country does not start immediately to the Lord Lieutenant even upon weighty matters."⁵⁰

Nonetheless, John Green presented the Smiths vestry petition to Governor George Beckwith who, after receiving both letters of defence from Stephenson presented them to the House of Assembly's Legislative Council, along with his comments on the problem. The governor alerted the legislators that Stephenson had not requested a license or authority. This apparently was not sufficient to disqualify him, so Beckwith offered it as a premise for placing restrictions on persons of his description "...not regular in Holy Orders..."; he wanted for the Assemblymen to consider whether such ministers should take up residence in the colony as clergy "...or even to officiate for a limited period."⁵¹ The problem for Beckwith and the vestry lay in Stephenson's credentials. "I hope your Excellency does not forget," wrote Stephenson in his first letter to the governor, "that I satisfied you Sir, with respect to my appointment for Bermuda by the Annual Minutes of our Conferences, and also by a pass out of Ireland under the hands of Alderman James of the City of Dublin authorised by Lord Viscount Castlereah which I can produce any time."⁵² Beckwith's complaint was clearly not an issue when the two men had first met upon the missionary's arrival in 1799, and his 'lacking credentials' were then not worth his hassling Stephenson. The governor had been satisfied that he knew "...Mr. Wesley's people to be peaceable and loyal

Subjects...". Thus the governor was forced to deal with the credentials at hand and he gave the very convenient argument that they had expired, good only for 1799.⁵³ But no law had, up until May 24, 1800, prevented the missionary from exhorting the 'Negroes' and 'Coloureds'.

This, of course, was to change. The House of Assembly and the executive passed *An Act to prevent persons pretending to be Ministers of the Gospel or Missionaries form any Religious Society Whatever and not interested with Holy Orders according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, from acting as Preachers* (1800). It declared that "...no person whatever, pretending, or having pretended to be a Minister of the Gospel or Missionary from any Religious Society, and not regularly invested with holy Orders according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England or the Church of Scotland, shall be allowed to preach or propagate, in these Islands any doctrine upon the Gospel by writing or Printing, or by speaking to teaching or in any wise lecturing or exhorting any public or collected Audience whatever...".⁵⁴

Should any missionary preach regardless, the preacher was to pay £50 and suffer a six month imprisonment without bail. If the missionary continued to violate the Act, he or she was to be sent to the public jail to await a trial at the subsequent assizes. Anyone providing a place on his or her property for the individual to preach was also to be fined, and was jailed without bail. "And Whereas it is conceived that the Morals of Youth are in great measure inculcated and established by precepts and Examples of School Masters..." the same restrictions were extended to teachers, violators subject to the same penalty: £50 and prison for six months.⁵⁵ The Act passed the Assembly on April 25, 1800,

concurred by the Executive Council under President Henry Tucker on May 23, and given gubernatorial assent the next day. Significantly it passed into law without a suspending clause, a useful tactic for colonial laws having dubious constitutional validity.⁵⁶

Stephenson decided to violate the Act which he conceived as unconstitutional; but this time he was preaching in the middle parishes, at the home of silversmith Peter Pallais in the city of Hamilton. The mayor, Dan Tucker, immediately ordered his arrest and that of Pallais, and while the silversmith posted bail, Stephenson refused as a protest against the law. He was sent to the small jail in St. George's.⁵⁷ Defiantly, his 'Negro' Methodist followers met outside of his cell window, from which he preached to them.⁵⁸ As he became ill, partly due to his age and his confinement, the governor ordered that he be allowed to walk around the jail- provided, of course, that he did not preach once he was out. But Stephenson defiantly preached regardless, and was confined again to the cell.⁵⁹ On its cedar floor, he carved: "John Stephenson, Methodist Missionary, was imprisoned in this jail six months and fined **fifty** pounds, for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to African blacks and captive negroes. St. George's Bermuda June 1801."⁶⁰

Stephenson and his cause, however, were not without supporters, 'black' and 'white'. A letter anonymously written by someone under the pseudonym 'A friend to British Laws and Religious Liberty' was submitted to the *Bermuda Gazette* criticising the 1800 Act of Assembly. It declared the law not only offensive to English constitutional principles protecting religious expression (at least as enshrined in the Toleration Act), but to those defending one's household

sovereignty. "A man's house is his castle", wrote the correspondent, "and no one dare molest him by the British constitutional laws." The correspondent continued:

In the year 1794 I think it was, such an unconstitutional law was passed at St. Vincent's, to militate against missionaries sent to that island, without a *suspending clause*, and on the bill being sent home, was instantly rejected by the King in Council, and a reprimand to the _____ (sent out by the next packet) for passing any bill of the kind without the suspending clause: in consequence of the act at that Island, a Methodist preacher was imprisoned for preaching on Sunday to the negroes, - but the colony had to pay his expenses, &c. &c. [*italics in text*]⁶¹

Locally, a petition complaining both about Stephenson's imprisonment and the Act that jailed him was prepared. According to Wilkinson, it was sent to the king from "...484 white Bermudians of whom only 105 were Wesleyans...". If one believes Wilkinson, *no 'blacks' at all* participated in the signing of the petition, which is, frankly, unbelievable. Eight years later, as will be noted, 106 Methodists were 'black'. It is easy to believe that the 'black' numbers grew by one, and they comprised the Wesleyans sending the petition: that the 105 Wilkinson noticed were in fact 'black Methodists'.

Nonetheless, the tone of the discourse emanating from the executive was one of increasing hostility to Stephenson and increasing disregard for the implications of the law. George Beckwith took a swipe at the missionary in a speech to the legislature outlining his favourite subject: the dangers facing the government in the 'Age of Revolution'.

In some Countries this disposition is manifested through the Body politic, until at length it acquires a majesty which no act can conquer: in some it is vigorously promoted by all the aids of Infidelity; in others it affects to breathe the benign spirit of the Gospel, perverting with the most impious hypocrisy the mild Doctrine of our Blessed Redeemer into an engine of crooked policy of the blackest nature.⁶²

It was, however, not easy to determine whether the supporters of Stephenson or the Bermuda colonial leadership were the better at divining the

political mood in England. Thomas Coke had sent copies of the petition to influential persons, and although the petitioners had begged that the Act be disallowed, the decision was made to let it run its three year course without renewal. Nonetheless, before it expired, and of the urging of Coke, Stephenson left the colony on April 11, 1802; and Coke wrote his disapproval of how the missionary handled the conflict to the Duke of Portland, the Secretary of State responsible for colonial affairs: "...however unimpeachable Mr. Stephenson's loyalty may be, he may too possibly have discovered an overwarmth when he thought himself hardly treated which probably led to severer measures than might have otherwise have been deemed expedient... Any such imprudence I should sincerely lament and strongly censure...".⁶³ The illegality of these measures apparently were not enough to nullify Coke's censure.

Yet the anger the 1800 Act of Assembly produced among many in Britain was a reflection that Stephenson was not deemed beyond the crown and Parliament in his stubborn protest: it was legislation conceived as a clear violation of the Act of Toleration; and the ambiguous action by the metropolitan government (letting it die but not killing it) would not be repeated in 1802 when the more influential Jamaican Assembly tried to pass similar legislation. The "Bill to Prevent Preaching by Persons not duly Qualified by Law" was denied royal assent, as was another version passed in 1807.⁶⁴

Stephenson's expulsion from Bermuda (if not the lack of support he received from Coke) provided an important lesson to another Methodist missionary, Joshua Marsden. Much later, when Marsden had arrived back in

England after his own ministry in Bermuda, he described what he felt constituted the root cause of Stephenson's experiences.

The Governor of the islands, General Beckwith, was not disposed to be very friendly towards him, and some of his excellency's minions and parasites, were his sworn enemies, from the first moment they knew his errand to the island. A man that denounced oppression, and preached against female prostitution, would not be acceptable where tyranny is legal and concubinage grafted upon profit and interest.⁶⁵

Marsden also met with Peter Pallais during his stay in Bermuda. He recalled Pallais enduring a virtual internal exile in the colony. By the time Marsden met him, the missionary saw, as he put it, a "...sickly old man, pressed down to the earth with poverty, affliction, and persecution."⁶⁶ Marsden's mission work, thus, would be more diplomatic.

The Reverend Joshua Marsden arrived in April 1808, ostensibly "...to preach the gospel to the negroes..."; but he first set about trying to diminish what he constantly referred to as the prejudices of 'white' Bermudians to Methodism. He began by emphasising those points of philosophical agreement between this movement and that of the Establishment Church. "To shew them that I was not an enemy to the church of England," he recalled:

I frequently attended the service on the Sabbath forenoon, and to convince them of the depth and importance of the doctrine which form the beauty and palladium of the church, selected subjects embracing the first principles of religion; such as the fall of man... the total depravity of human nature; man's misery, weakness and blindness while alienated from God; that if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; that we must feel the wickedness of our hearts; repent of sin and humbly and earnestly apply to Christ for pardon; that by grace we are saved through faith, and that without God's Holy Spirit we cannot do anything aright, but that God will give his Holy Spirit to them: illustrating these subjects by quotations from the prayer book, referring them to chapter and verse, and using that and my bible as my preaching companions, so that their prejudices gradually gave way...⁶⁷

He knew the conflict Stephenson had with the local clergymen, and sought to avoid a repetition of that type of dissension. Still, there was sufficient 'white' hostility: most of those he met with, as he put it, "...carried their opposition in their looks."⁶⁸ But his greatest support would come from those whom Coke had sent him to convert. Upon his arrival, for example, Marsden, his pregnant wife, and their young child, were given a room at the guesthouse of a man whose name he wrote phonetically: Daniel Mellorey [read: Mallory].⁶⁹ Mallory was the 'free Negro' Methodist who would later serve as leader of the Paget-Warwick Methodists before Edward Fraser. As Marsden first based himself in the eastern parish of St. George's, many of his early 'Negro' and 'Coloured' converts came from nearby; and St. George's in particular had the largest population of free 'Negro' and free 'Coloured' people, some of whom became prominent early Methodists. Two of them included persons Marsden characterised as 'two respectable Free persons': Ruth Bascomb and Letitia Harvey.

The other persons he met were Tony Burges (of whom Marsden remembered as "... a venerable old black man... hard upon seventy years of age...") and his wife Jane.⁷⁰ Tony Burges is particularly notable. He may have had very dim memories, as a very young child, of the arrival of Methodist missionary,

George Whitefield, in the 1740s; and if Marsden judged his age correctly, he was born roughly nine to twelve years after the poisoning plots introduced a re-definition of the 'customs of the country'. As a child born during these changes, a young adult during the aftermath of the Conspiracy of 1761, and an elder in the new era of resistance, Burges' life was one which spanned many developments in the reaction to the socio-political order: indeed, in his latter years, he chose to become a participant in the final pre-Abolition incarnation of this reaction.

As Marsden travelled through the eastern parishes of the colony, he recalled meeting Succo Tucker and his daughter, Sally Succo Tucker. As a contrast to the icy reception he was receiving from some 'whites', he remembered Sally Tucker's statement made when he had passed her house. "O Mr. Marsden," he recorded her as declaring, "I shall bless God that ever you came to Bermuda; God has made you my eye-lid opener!"⁷¹

'Negro' and 'Coloured' members, according to his accounts, constituted 106 out of the 136 Methodists in the colony between 1808 and 1812.⁷² There seems to have been a large drop from the 484 'white' Bermudians Wilkinson noted: it thus would seem that only thirty 'whites' were left by 1812, and 'blacks' were numerically dominating the movement. Again, a stratum of hostility and fear was the cause, and it underlay much of local 'white' opinion, regardless of Marsden. It did not take long before the movement was perceived racially. Some 'whites' were derisively calling his church the 'Negro Chapel' and him (as if to allow a play on the ambiguities of the phrase) the 'Negro Preacher'. Moreover, some of the 'respectables', as he called them, who came to hear him eventually

stopped coming to his meetings: "...they were incommoded with the blacks whom they would not intermix even to worship God!"⁷³

But much to the chagrin of the 106 'Negroes' and 'coloureds', when Marsden preached to the Methodist converts, the 30 'whites' that did come excluded the 'Negro' and 'Coloured' worshippers from the building holding the meetings: 'Negro' and 'coloured' Methodists found themselves obliged to peer through the windows. This new situation, which bothered the preacher, was complained about by his 'black' congregation. "The blacks," he wrote in his journal, "frequently spoke of it as a matter of great gratulation that I had come to the island to preach to them, and seemed in some just degree envious of the whites, who, in some instances (over which I had no control), would not allow them to come into the congregation..."⁷⁴

The incident reflected the irritation 'blacks' had with these types of customs; and they may even have had sought to escape these customs by joining the Methodist movement. James Christie Esten may have implied that the reason for the increasing interest in Methodism among 'blacks' lay in the unwelcoming customs of the Anglicans and other local Protestant movements. He pointed out in a meeting in 1825: "...I am happy to say, that with respect to the chapel built by the Methodists, the greater proportions of the subscribers are of the Church of England. There are nine churches and nine parishes; but the churches are so small, that they will not contain more than the white population, and therefore the opinion is gaining ground every day, that if the blacks are to receive religious instruction it must be [from] the Wesleyan Methodists..."⁷⁵ There is an argument here for suggesting that Bermudian Methodism was increasingly being conceived

by the 'blacks' and 'coloureds' as their movement- a 'Negro Church', with 'Negro preachers'.

Indeed the chapel built by Fraser and the 'black' and 'coloured' Methodists in Paget-Warwick was but an extension of this 'ownership', and an escape from the humiliations of 'integrated' Anglican services. It was built in 1827, at an area called 'Cobbs Hill' in Warwick; and although called the Cobbs Hill Wesleyan Methodist Church, its other name, the 'Moonlight Church' reflects the fact that the slaves who constructed this 'Negro chapel' were obliged to build it on moonlit nights (and on Sundays and holidays). But it did not open the main body of the nine existing churches to 'black' and 'coloured' Anglicans; instead it gave them a place 'of their own'.

Moreover, bondservants in the group worked around servile schedules in a way explicitly advocated by the missionary Stephenson. It is therefore not surprising that some 'whites' would co-operate with it. Cobb, who owned the land allowed them to purchase a portion of it for their church. James Christie Esten, always concerned to keep Bermuda's customs in keeping with metropolitan morality, provided legal assistance as needed.⁷⁶ But, on the other hand, it was one place where 'black' and 'coloured' adherents could sit in any part of the church they pleased and control a part of the religious movement; and they were able to be served by ministers from the 'black' and 'coloured' community: the itinerant Daniel Mallory and the Reverend Edward Fraser. Indeed, the congregation had as its ministers first a free 'black' and then an enslaved 'coloured'.

Nonetheless, these events transpired in the later years of the slavery era and with a more mature local Methodist movement: in the early days of the Methodist

ministry, the problem of racial stratification would haunt Marsden and his 'Negro' and 'coloured' congregation. It followed him as he moved his ministry to the central parishes, to the newly established city of Hamilton in Pembroke parish.⁷⁷ Like St. George's, Pembroke contained a large number of 'Free Negroes and 'Free Coloureds'. During the time of his ministry in Bermuda, the same number of free 'Negroes' and 'Coloureds' lived there as in the parish of Hamilton. At least two important signatories to the 1834 free 'Negro and 'Coloured' petition (William Burrell and Robert Packwood) lived in Pembroke. More to the point, the new chapel built in the city of Hamilton, whose construction Marsden had supervised, was built with much labour and assistance from the 'blacks'. It was completed in 1810.⁷⁸

Yet when Marsden faced, again, the demands from 'whites' for racial segregation at his services, he, according to Packwood, caved in to a compromise: 'Blacks' and 'Coloureds' would sit on one side of the room, the 'whites' on the other.⁷⁹ It would have been an innovation in that it was now possible for 'Negro' and 'Coloured' converts to attend services in greater numbers and to occupy the front rows of a church: but it recognised the watered down custom of racial separation; and, as such, it was clearly a compromise with local mores.

Radicalisation of the 'Berkeleyan Line': religious education and evangelisation

By the time James Christie Esten addressed a meeting of Methodist officials in London in 1825, the transmutation from religious conversion into religious education had been made. The site of this transmutation, as had been stated, occurred after the arrival in 1808 of John Stepenson's replacement, Joshua Marsden.⁸⁰ It began, Marsden argued, when he engaged one individual to establish a school for 'black' and 'coloured' children in the islands, and he declared that the institution established was the first ever.⁸¹ It was met with great enthusiasm by 'blacks' and 'coloureds': "...many of the boys and girls quickly came forward," recalled Marsden, "and these again taught their parents so that I had the pleasure of seeing many of them make considerable progress in their spelling books and testaments...".⁸² This enthusiasm he juxtaposed to negative predictions about the enterprise of religious education from some 'whites'. "The Hamilton blacks," he wrote, "wished me to teach them to read, as many of the blacks in St. George looked over the heads of their fellows in this respect."⁸³ He added:

The objection that they have no capacities, is both foolish and untrue; for, how can we tell unless we make the trial? But those who have made the trial can refute the allegation, which, at best, has but the shadow of truth. I know an eminent writer (Mr. Jefferson, late president of the United States) has said a good deal upon the subject, but to what purpose? Surely he has not proved that they cannot become good men and true Christians!⁸⁴

Still, beyond Marsden's enthusiastic exertions (and following Christie's chronology), the year 1819 constituted a small watershed in the development of religious education for 'blacks' and 'coloureds'. A number of organisations concerned with the spreading of Christian knowledge expanded their operations. These joined with other bodies to either fund or sustain a number of schools. More of these were Sunday schools, but a number of them were day-schools. Several

organisations provided support for these schools: a local branch of the Society for the Conversion of Negroes; women's organisations such as the Ladies' Society of England; the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge; and the Bible Society.⁸⁵ The result, as Esten observed, was that every parish had either a day-school or a Sunday school for the education of 'Negroes', 'coloureds', and 'whites'.⁸⁶

Esten gave a crude estimate of the number of people receiving religious education. Overall he estimated 475 people, 'white' and 'black', adults and children. Two hundred and fifty blacks, according to him, were in the Methodist schools, while 100 were in the Presbyterian. Seventy-five 'whites', he observed, were in day schools and fifty others educated by Ladies' Associations in the colony.

More precise statistics were given in 1832. For the 'blacks' and 'coloureds' there existed thirteen day and Sunday schools, one or two in each parish, including two located on the island of St. David's. All of these schools provided education for 808 people. Five of these were day schools, providing regular daily instruction, the rest were Sunday schools. One hundred and fifty-eight students were attending the day-school in 1832, with 297 attending the Sunday schools. For the 'whites', there existed ten schools overall, five day and five Sunday. One hundred and twenty-four 'whites' attended the day-schools in 1832; two hundred and twenty-nine went to the Sunday schools.

Table 34.— Day and Sunday Schools**Day Schools**

<i>Parish/Island</i>	<i>'White'</i>	<i>'Coloured'</i>	<i>Supporting Organisation</i>
<i>St. David's Is.</i>	16	36	'white': Ladies' of St. George's 'coloured': Society for the Conversion of Negroes
<i>St. George's</i>		25	Ladies' of St. George's
<i>Devonshire</i>	25		Trust Fund in Bermuda (Classical Academy)
<i>Paget</i>	46	55	'white': Society for the Promotion of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; and the S.P.C.K. (Bermuda Branch) 'coloured': Ladies' Society of England
<i>Warwick</i>	12	30	'white': Society Promotion Christian Knowledge 'coloured': Ladies Society of England
<i>Southampton</i>		12	Ladies Society of England
<i>Sandys</i>	25		Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and Society for the Promotion of the Gospel (Bermuda Branch)
Totals	124	158	

Sunday Schools

<i>Parish/Island</i>	<i>'White'</i>	<i>'Coloured'</i>	<i>Supporting Organisation</i>
<i>St. George's</i>		100	Funds from the Bishop of Nova Scotia
<i>Hamilton</i>	35	20	'white': Ladies' of the Parish 'coloured': Funds from Bishop of Nova Scotia
<i>Smiths</i>	22	36	'white': Ladies' of the Parish 'coloured': Ladies' Society of England
<i>Devonshire</i>	40	30	'white': Ladies' of the Parish 'coloured': Ladies' Society of England
<i>Pembroke</i>	52	16	'white': Ladies' of the Parish 'coloured': Funds from the Bishop of Nova Scotia
<i>Warwick</i>		30	Funds from the Bishop of Nova Scotia
<i>Southampton</i>		25	Funds from the Bishop of Nova Scotia
<i>Sandys</i>	80	40	'white': Ladies of the Parish 'coloured': Funds from the Bishop of Nova Scotia
Total	229	297	

Source: BB 1832, p. 126.

Moreover, several 'blacks' opened schools to provide religious education for 'Negro' and 'coloured' children. Merchant and evangelist William Tankard had opened one in Sandys parish which, by 1832, was educating 40 of the 'black/coloured' children there.⁸⁷ Robert Packwood, Sr. (who signed the free 'black' and 'coloured' petition and was, post-Abolition, known for his philanthropic concerns) was educating sixteen 'black/coloured' children in Pembroke in that year.⁸⁸ There was also Sally Succo Tucker, noted earlier for her Sunday-school in Smiths parish. There had been established in Warwick parish an infant day-school. It was founded and run by a 'coloured' bondswoman named Maria Tucker. When Susette Lloyd visited the school in 1830, it had already been operating for several years. Lloyd was impressed with Maria Tucker's skill as a teacher, describing her as a young woman of "...exemplary character and considerable acquirements..."; and Lloyd re-called:

She was surrounded by her little flock; and, as proof that the negroes, and especially the children, are not so deficient in intellect as some have supposed, I must tell you of a little fellow, about three years old, who repeated a number of hymns, the Ten Commandments, and Lord's Prayer, and, besides answering a variety of questions, read portions of Mrs. Timmer's Spelling-book.⁸⁹

It was clear, through Lloyd's testimony, that one had a literate bondswoman who was using her skill to satisfy the demand for literacy of other 'blacks' in the parish.⁹⁰

Both Packwood and Tankard received £10 of financial support from Anglican Bishop John Inglis of Nova Scotia. Inglis had expressed an interest, like Dr. Coke, in religious instruction of 'Negroes' within his diocese. Maria Tucker would receive some support, in 1832, from the Ladies Society of England which paid her a stipend of £25. By then her day-school had thirty 'black/coloured'

scholars: fourteen boys, and sixteen girls.⁹¹ Moreover, in 1830, there was a movement to secure Maria Tucker's manumission, and indeed Lloyd's description was intended to aid this cause.⁹²

All of these examples provide support for the view that there had been an attempt by 'Negroes' to co-act with metropolitan agents to keep the provision of religious education a priority within the 'humanitarian revolution'. This point is highlighted and extended when one examines the 'Negro' and 'coloured' demand for religious education. Those keeping track of school attendance outlined quantitatively what Marsden and Hamilton had described qualitatively. Comparatively, 'Negroes/coloureds' outnumbered 'whites' by 34 in the day schools and by 69 at Sunday schools. "They are anxious for instruction", wrote Susette Lloyd in 1829, "and gladly attend the Sunday-school which is held in the church."⁹³ She wrote on the success of the 'Negro' infant school established in Paget and the speed with which the children learned the lessons; and her remarks appeared as a virtual paraphrase of Hamilton's statements: "Whatever may be the difference of capacity between the negro and the European," she wrote, "I certainly think that the former had the advantage of the poorer native whites. He possesses a greater degree of energy and vivacity of character, and a stronger desire for information, which may, perhaps, be the effect of ambition, but it is certainly a proof, that a finer mental capacity had not been denied him."⁹⁴

Lloyd would locate the reason for interest in religious education in ambition. As will be underscored below, this 'ambition' is also characterised as an emulation of prevailing and accepted standards; and given the threat this 'emulation/ambition' posed to the 'customs of the country', it was also political: a

'politics of ambition/emulation'. Esten, however, expressed the opinion that these quests for religious instruction were more intellectual than political: that they were born of the desire of many 'Negroes' and 'coloureds', especially the adults, to read the Bible for themselves. He noted that adults were learning faster than the children, contrary to popular beliefs about age and education.⁹⁵ Still, he was naive to assume that the desire for literacy was "...merely from a wish to read the Bible..." and had no connected political intention;⁹⁶ that all of those receiving religious instruction did not have the desire to take the control of biblical interpretation out of the hands of 'white' proprietors. It had been through biblical exegesis that 'Negro' Christians in the 1600s first challenged the appropriateness of the 'enslaved Christian'; and the Bible, since Heydon, was used to justify the slavery of Christians in Bermuda.

A synthesised assumption, between the motives suggested by Lloyd and those offered by Esten, can be advocated: that the literacy/religious education and religious conversion movements adopted by 'blacks' served both intellectual as well as social ambitions. It is in this context that these projects constituted a politics. Colonial proprietors, quite predictably, exhibited their discomfort and hostility to religious education and literacy programs for slaves. Hamilton's reflections can be recalled. Susette Lloyd, who became a shadow assistant in the establishment of the 'Infant Day School' for 'Negroes' in Paget, remembered:

There was at first prejudice to the proposed school; many thought, that in proportion as you instructed the slaves, they would be bad members of society, and wholly unfitted for their station; but this prejudice is gradually giving way to the conviction of the great utility of the plan....⁹⁷

This 'dying prejudice' thus constituted a predominating theme in the 'humanitarian revolution', and a reflection of the compromises made by metropolitan agents in religious education and conversion movements. As was noted, metropolitan agents were prepared to make compromises with the customs and the interests of the colonial leadership, if for no other reason than to avoid a return to the tragedy of the Stephenson mission. As Governor Hamilton demonstrated through his early advocacy of religious education, this was a 'congenital' tendency of metropolitan involvement in local radicalism.

Moreover, unlike the Methodists, those within the Establishment Church who embraced the need for 'Negro' and 'coloured' conversion and education in Bermuda tended to be directly responsible for its execution. The functional equivalent of Dr. Thomas Coke was not Susette Lloyd, but Bishop John Inglis and the Reverend Aubrey Spencer. Spencer was an Englishman who lived and worked in Bermuda as its archdeacon. Appointed archdeacon in 1824 and married into a socially prominent local Bermudian family,⁹⁸ he committed himself to 'Negro' evangelisation and education: it was the governess he employed, Susette Lloyd, whom he utilised in an unclear way in the development of the Paget parish 'Negro Infant School'. He had in fact founded the school under the auspices of the 'Ladies' Society for Promoting the Early Education of Negro Children'.⁹⁹

Bishop John Inglis was a more remote and itinerant, but no less dedicated, sponsor of religious education in the colony. Born in New York but resident since his childhood in Nova Scotia, he served as the bishop of the diocese of Nova

Scotia during most of the 1820s and part of the 1830s. A reorganisation of the overseas Anglican churches resulted in the Bishop of Nova Scotia taking control of Bermuda from the Bishop of London.¹⁰⁰ As had been noted, the Bishop of London had communicated with Hamilton on the subject of religious education and Inglis continued the project. Toward that end as well, Inglis made four visits to the colony and, during his second visit in 1830, met with Susette Lloyd.¹⁰¹

Concerning Inglis in particular, Graham and Joan Mount reacted with some degree of disapproval to discussions of the bishop's racial attitudes. "Rather than ask whether he was a racist, like almost everybody else," they contended, "it is more constructive to determine to what extent, if any, he was able to rise above the majority in his environment."¹⁰² They argued that Inglis' approach to the culture of racial segregation in Bermuda must be viewed in the context of an environment like Bermuda and its strong attachment to its racial codes. They quoted a conversation held between the bishop on his first visit to Bermuda and a 'Negro' pilot:

'I had an opportunity for some conversations with Forbes the black pilot, a pious, sensible and very influential person among the blacks. He was much gratified by hearing of my plans for the instruction of the blacks, and promised his zealous endeavours among his own people.'¹⁰³

The 'black' pilot was James Esten Forbes, the warden of the King's pilots noted earlier. Forbes' role in the socio-political aspirations of 'blacks' dovetails well with this conversation with Inglis. Yet for the Mounts, the issue dovetails better with their view of Inglis: that whatever his attitudes to racial segregation, he was committed to the educational aspects of 'black' and 'coloured' aspirations. As they summarised his feelings: "It does, in fairness, appear that racial

segregation was a fact of life which Inglis *accepted*, rather than *promoted*." [italics in text].¹⁰⁴

However, the problem, as the 'blacks' and 'coloureds' conceived it, was not simply reducible to the issue of racial separation. It concerned as well the customs of racial stratification and inequality of rights within the church. At the Anglican church in Warwick parish, 'Negroes' planned to write a petition seeking the expansion of their portion of the church. Lloyd noted: "... I am happy to say that a handsome sum has been collected for the building of an entirely new church, which is to furnish ample room for the whole congregation."¹⁰⁵ The Mounts noted that Inglis's journal gives no indication if he viewed the principle of racial segregation and the principle of slavery as moral questions worthy of his attention.¹⁰⁶

Nonetheless, Inglis did address himself to what he thought was the moderate demand of increasing space within the church: this was also the expressed demand of local clergymen and, as noted, many local 'black' and 'coloured' Anglicans. Inglis wrote in April 1830: "'The clergy complained of the great want of room in the Churches for the coloured people who desire to attend them. Upon a late occasion..., when 200 coloured people attended,... only 20 had room allotted to them.'"¹⁰⁷ But as Inglis found out, creating space inside a parish church for larger numbers of 'blacks' was often a contentious issue. The Mounts noted that when Inglis and Spencer arranged to send money from England to enlarge the Devonshire parish church for 'black people', the funds were rejected.¹⁰⁸

The Mounts were arguing correctly that within the widespread acceptance of slavery and racial segregation, Inglis was willing to demand some alterations of certain customs. But the analysis of Inglis's approach to 'Negro' education should be extended more widely: to the other members of the Establishment Church dealing with the 'customs of the country' of segregation and slavery in their attempt to 'convert the Negroes' and provide them with a religious education.

It is concerning slavery that this takes on clarity through the Bermudian experiences of Susette Lloyd. Lloyd lived with the Spencer family at a Paget residence near the growing city of Hamilton. When she went to live on two occasions at the home of William Tucker in St. George's, she was obliged to enjoy the services of his slaves. She had learnt early that the purpose of slaves was to attend to the petty and tedious details of life. She had, in essence, become like a proprietor: a consumer of slave labour. It should therefore come as no surprise that her view of slavery in Bermuda would occasionally approach that of many proprietors:

She [the slave mistress], in the first place has no handy maidens at her behest, but is perhaps burthened with three or four dawdling women, whose noisy half-clad children, fighting and crawling about, add to the difficulty of maintaining anything like order.¹⁰⁹

Her acquired 'proprietor's vision' also shaped and reflected how she felt religious education was to operate in a slave society: as a project with benefits to proprietors. She noted in a letter of September 5, 1830, two months after her above remarks: "While staying here [in Somerset, Sandys parish], I was distressed to see the ignorance in which hundreds of little negro children were running about; and the benefit of an infant-school immediately occurred to me."¹¹⁰ 'Negro' education was going to be sold to unwilling proprietors as something approaching

a nursery for young slaves. Lloyd favoured the education of children: she felt that children had less to unlearn, and that their minds were "...still unfettered by prejudice or uncontaminated by the influence of bad example...".¹¹¹ But Lloyd was in a position to appreciate from the proprietor's point of view the need to provide a 'structured setting' for *young* children. Slave proprietors viewed very young enslaved children as, among other things, slaves without exploitable skills. As they conceived it, they were slaves who could be a nuisance to them as they got in the way of the exclusive service of enslaved parents.¹¹² Consequently, the 'Negro *Infant* school' as a day-school would have scholars whose learning could not be interrupted by servitude; and it served as a kindergarten, a place to put children while their parents could, without distraction, perform their roles as slaves. Slave proprietors, as Lloyd noted, clearly conceived of this school plan in this light, particularly as a kindergarten for their youngest slaves. Their increasing acceptance of the religious education of their slaves was, thus, not unrelated to this function.¹¹³

Nonetheless, 'Black' and 'Coloured' adults used the education of their children as a means to obtain more regular instruction for themselves: the desire to have their children educated had its obvious origins in the adult need to become literate. Children, after a day of classes, often, if not invariably, went home and at night, at the termination of the labours of the day, taught their enslaved parents what they had been learning. This, again, was the scenario Marsden had discerned as far back as his own ministry in Bermuda.

Linking Bermuda-type racial segregation to education, Inglis had the opportunity to visit the 'Negro Infant School' of Paget. As Susette Lloyd wrote in her letter of May 1830:

On Wednesday, *after examining a white free school in our parish*, the Bishop visited our Negro infant school, accompanied by Dr. Spencer and Mr. Wix, Archdeacon of Newfoundland... Above seventy children were present, some not more than two years old, all arranged in classes... The children went through their lessons extremely well, and his lordship expressed himself delighted with their proficiency, and with the novelty of the system, this being the first infant school he had ever seen. [*italics added*]¹¹⁴

A very fine line separates acceptance, defined as 'toleration' or the permitting of something, and promotion defined as act of giving it encouragement. But Inglis (and Lloyd and Spencer) clearly crossed the fine line, and not only in this support and promotion of segregated education. Lloyd's tone, again in contrast to Marsden's and her earlier comments about the segregated graveyard, imply so little scandal about this state of affairs. Moreover, without undermining the racial separation of education, Inglis extended his philanthropy to provide for the salaries of teachers of five different 'coloured' Sunday schools.¹¹⁵ There was little to no expressed intention by Inglis for an amalgamation of these schools racially. It, again, underscored the issue under study, beyond the question of the racial mores and attitudes: the extent to which the provision of education and conversion for 'Negroes' was meant to work around the 'customs of the country'. For 'blacks' and 'coloureds', wishing to create a shrinkage in the socio-political distance between them and the 'whites', these policies were to feed a gradualism that would constitute one wing of their nineteenth-century resistance. But this is a point which takes on concluding clarity in the examination of legal and

constitutional developments. It is to these developments that the discussion of radical resistance finally turns.

Toward constitutional compromise

Governor Stephen Chapman finally introduced the Parliamentary Emancipation Act of 1833 to the legislature on January 9, 1834.¹¹⁶ A committee of the House of Assembly was constituted to discuss the Act, and, in February 1834, two abolition acts were passed: *An Act for the Abolition of Slavery in these Islands, in Consideration of Compensation*; and *An Act to repeal the Laws Exclusively Applicable to free Black and free Coloured Persons, and to Extend to them the Laws Applicable to White Persons, and to Fix the Qualifications for Jurors, Voters, and the Electors and Candidates for Certain Offices and Places of Trust*. Both were to come into effect August 1, 1834. It was with the passage of these twin Acts that the bulk of Bermuda's socio-political customs suffered denouement: it took one month to mortally wound what had been building and growing over the past two hundred and eleven years. This final section concerns the process by which these traditions were dismantled, and the controversies and compromises that resulted.

The best moment upon which to begin outlining this dismantling is, again, where a 'black' and 'people of colour' critique made its rare direct appearance in the archival record: "The Petition of the Undersigned, in Behalf of Themselves,

and other Free-People-of-Colour and Blacks, of the Islands of Bermuda". It was drawn up on January 9, 1834, presented to the Council on January 13, and laid before the House of Assembly on January 21, 1834.¹¹⁷ As was clear from this chronology, its preparation was completed and it was signed the day Chapman introduced the Parliamentary Emancipation Act to the colonial legislature.

The petition reflected the problems free 'blacks' and 'coloureds' had with the prevailing structure of colonial society, and the past attempts to amend its customs; and they feared, as happened with the attempts to revise the *Act of the Government of the Negroes etc., bond and free* (1764), their interests would be misrepresented or undermined. Thus, by presenting a petition directly to the metropolitan administration by way of the colonial governor (and by expressing their concerns in a public forum like the *Bermuda Royal Gazette*), there was an increased likelihood that their concerns would be expressed, if not appreciated, accurately: "That it is with heartfelt satisfaction and gratitude," they wrote, "that Your Petitioners have remarked, the increasing liberality of their most gracious Sovereign, his enlightened Ministers, the Imperial Parliament and the generous British People in their behalf, to whom, however, they apprehend, the extent of their grievances had not been sufficiently made known."¹¹⁸ It was a strategy that would produce, as will be seen, contradictory results.

No less than a decade before, government discussion had focused on revising the Act of 1764: toward ameliorating the condition of slaves, free 'blacks' and free 'people of colour'. As with other policies of this type, a fact that the petitioners duly noted, there was clearly a metropolitan influence toward

improving this 'condition', and encouraging the colonial elite in that direction. Controversial Governor William Lumley, for example, used the occasion of an address to the colonial Assembly, in February 1824, to discuss the issue of the 'forensic disabilities', in particular, of the Act of 1764:

...I am sure you must be desirous, in common with every person that takes an interests in the concerns of Bermuda, (among other changes) to remove from its jurisprudence the stigma that exclusively attaches to it, - the rejection of the evidence of the respectable Free Coloured Population of these Islands in all cases, Civil and Criminal, in your Courts of Law.¹¹⁹

Those 'other changes' of course, refer to the other provisions of the Act of 1764. Lumley had stated it as "...gratifying to myself personally, that an object near to my heart, (the amelioration of the moral, religious and civil condition of the Slave and Free Colored Population of Bermuda), is likely to receive from you that degree of attention which it is unquestionably in your power to bestow..."; and he added: "...because it is impossible to imagine that you should consider so important an improvement inconsistent with their present condition, or productive of danger to the repose and tranquillity of the Community, as respects the Slave population...".¹²⁰

Yet when attempts in the 1820s were made to modify the Act of 1764, particularly towards the overall design of amelioration, the local leadership undermined the process by debates and dissension. Chief Justice James Christie Esten had remarked that attempts to amend the forensic disabilities against 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' failed twice when brought before the colonial Assembly due to, as he put it "...differences of opinion...".¹²¹ By 1826, James Christie Esten, in his capacity as Chief Justice (he was also President of the Legislative Council), sought to re-articulate the discussion on the necessity of amelioration provisions;

and in his address to the Court of Assizes, he specifically focused on the forensic disabilities of the Act. "It is no mean part of legislative wisdom", he told the Grand Jury, "to watch the progress of Society, and to adapt the Laws to the changes in it, which necessarily result from the march of intellectual development." He did not deny earlier claims that the free 'blacks' of 'he time of the Act did not deserve some restriction of their forensic rights (they were, he declared "... completely ignorant, and perhaps altogether unlettered..."); but he felt that 'improvements' have been rendered on this class of people, no less by the programs of religious education in the colony. Moreover, the 'liberality of the times', as he put it, influenced demographically an expansion of their numbers; thus it had become problematic to exclude a portion of society from presenting evidence in a court of law. A large number of people were, in some important respects, existing outside the law and were thus, in many ways, immune to it.¹²²

But the *Act to Ameliorate the Condition of Slaves and Free Peoples of Colour* (1827), concurred by James Christie Esten as President of the Legislative Council, turned out to be a disappointment to some within the population of free 'blacks' and 'coloureds'. The petitioners of 1834 sarcastically italicised the term 'ameliorate' when they wrote about the problems unresolved by the Act of 1827.¹²³ It did, on the one hand, remove the punishments in the Act of 1764 which called for dismemberment or mutilation: it replaced the punishment for perjury with the pillory or hard labour or whipping, at the discretion of the court; and it demanded that 'black' and 'coloured' perjurers be given "... all such disabilities as ... [were] incurred by white persons, by the laws of England for the like offence."¹²⁴ It also protected the property rights of slaves, particularly allowing

slaves to inherit property.¹²⁵ Yet it continued the custom of placing all 'Negroes' and 'Coloureds', bond and free, on the periphery of social, ecclesiastical, and political life. Their rights to land ownership did not permit anyone of them to be elected to office, parochial or public; nor did it allow them to purchase pews in the 'white' portions of the church.¹²⁶

But 'black' and 'coloured' petitioners specifically cited the 'Certificate of Good Character' for criticism, the compromise solution worked out by the legislature in 1827. Free 'People of Colour' and free 'Negroes' could be administered an oath, give evidence, and be interrogated concerning civil and criminal cases as if they were 'whites'. But to enjoy this right, they had to obtain a 'certificate of good character' from the parish vestry of their residence. Slaves could also receive this certificate from the parish vestry their proprietors lived in, provided proprietors were involved in the discussion of the servile candidate's appropriateness.¹²⁷ The petitioners referred to it as a "...qualified privilege..." since the acquisition of it was determined by "...the caprice of a majority of [the respective]...vestry [and] may be withheld from them...".¹²⁸ Access to it could be affirmed or denied on arbitrary or personal or political reasons. They argued that they should be treated in court as other witnesses "...subject to the same objections as to their *relative* credibility." [italics in text]

Thus, one arrives at the central themes of the petition: the tendency of the government in the past to make the condition of slavery only marginally different from the conditions of free 'blacks' and free 'people of colour'; and to bestow disabilities on them on the basis of their race. "Your Petitioners have reason to believe," they observed in concluding this point, "that *this* is now almost the only

British Colony in which Free-men continue to be subject by Law to such numerous disabilities from a difference of Complexion alone."*[italics in text]*¹²⁹

Yet the petition is as much a form of 'Negro' and 'Coloured' radical resistance as the Conspiracy of 1761 was a part of the era of revolution and violence. There would, firstly, be no savage denunciation of slavery or even the conditions of local slaves. This might have arisen from the fact that at least three of the most prominent signatories were slave proprietors.¹³⁰ Significantly, the vast bulk of them, even among the freeholders, did not themselves own slaves, though they could have easily done so; and although not much is known of the debates that emerged over the constitution of the petition, it is tempting to wonder how much a principled anti-slavery was forced to bend to the needs of 'political practicality'. Indeed, any vicious assault on slavery, regardless of what the bulk of the petitioners truly felt, would have certainly angered local legislators, then busily re-shaping abolition legislation.

There was also the question of religious disabilities. These restrictions were a persistent item of complaint among many in the 'black' and 'coloured' population. This had been demonstrated above; and a petition in the year of 1835, from 'black' Anglicans in St. George's, demanded the right of 'blacks' and 'coloureds' to have funerals in the church itself. It was sent to Bishop Inglis.¹³¹ Indeed, some of the men who signed that complaint were associated with the 1834 petition. Yet these social and ritual concerns were not mentioned in the 1834 petition. Nor was mentioned *explicitly* the issue of racially separated education, though the remark about Bermuda as the only country that made distinctions on the basis of complexion is easily interpreted as criticising the colony's racial

segregation practices. Significantly however, the generation that signed this petition would be a part of the 'coloured' group supporting the 'Dowding Plan' which was alluded to above. As a singular multi-racial academic institution in Bermuda, it predictably faced great local elite hostility. But equally, it enjoyed great support from educators and groups within the 'coloured/black' population. Yet, again, no mention of singular multi-racial schools, or criticism of segregated education, arose from the 1834 petition.

But it might be argued that the 1834 petition opted for a strategy of explicitly mentioning only the forensic shortfalls (such as the 'certificate of good character'). It mentioned the disabilities previously challenged by metropolitan leaders like Lumley and local leaders like James Christie Esten. The petition's point was that the Amelioration Act fell short of even these demands. Petitioners may have thought that it was more prudent to criticise those things which the metropolitan government had criticised; and that it was equally more prudent to gradually deal with what the petitioners characterised, under vague terms, as "... various disabilities..." and "...same strictness of treatment...". Any criticism of metropolitan allies was avoided, replaced instead with expressions of gratitude and appreciation of metropolitan support: "... the increasing liberality of their most gracious Sovereign [etc.]...". Significantly, the local government, including the local governor, was not mentioned. The petitioners, as stated, sought to ensure that they maintained the metropolitan support needed to force, if necessary, colonial changes. Again, in this context, the petition was a symbolic reflection of all what has been characterised as radical resistance.

On paper at least, the bulk of the demands articulated in the petition were satisfied, particularly the explicitly stated ones. The first bill conceded to the demand for abolition, though as elsewhere, it assured that the proprietors be compensated for their 'loss of property'. The local Bermuda share came out of the £20,000,000 granted to all slave owners in the British colonies. One group of proprietors believed slave owners in Bermuda were due £171,855 or £45 per head.¹³²

It was, nonetheless, also decided by the Assembly to by-pass the apprenticeship scheme and, with Antigua, grant universal manumission immediately upon August 1. However, as one historian noted wryly, nothing was suggested about providing the newly freed with anything in the way of resources, much less financial compensation; and even more importantly, nothing was provided by way of protection from eviction from the land once August 1 arrived.¹³³ But the legislation did end slavery and removed for the manumitted the possibility of a long and economically problematic apprenticeship.

The second Act was more complicated. No less in keeping with the petition tabled by the free 'Coloured' and 'Negro' group in January 1834, the Assembly repealed the *Amelioration Act* of 1827 and other pieces of legislation "...imposing upon black or coloured persons... any penalty, duty, disability, or liabilities to which white persons are not subject by law, or taking away ...any right, privilege or franchise from which white persons are not excluded...".¹³⁴ It, thus, gave the freed 'Coloureds' and freed 'Negroes' what the petitioners in January wanted: legal equality with the 'whites'. But it did not guarantee social equality: there would, for example, be no movement to an amalgamation of

classrooms, and movement away from segregated instruction. The thirty-eight petitioners had hoped that they could be, as they put it, "... relieved from the various disabilities and invidious distinctions in which they have hitherto been subjected, and may be admitted to the enjoyment of rights and privileges which ought to be possessed in a state of Freedom." But race would remain a feature forging socio-political separation policy for a long time after 1834.

The second part of the Act also raised the property value qualification needed to run for Assembly, parochial offices and municipal offices. It also raised the requirements needed to be an elector of persons to these offices. To be an elector of a member to the House of Assembly before 1834, the property value at assessment had to be £40; after 1834 it was £100. To be a member of the House of Assembly before 1834 one's property had to have been worth £200; after 1834, £400. After 1834, to be an elector for a member of the two municipal governments of Hamilton and St. George's, the value of one's property had to be assessed at no less than £400; to be a member of the municipal government it had to be not less than £400. Qualifications as electors to parochial office required that the value of the property be not less than £100 after 1834; to be elected to parochial office after 1834 these had to be assessed at £200. Jurors were required to be literate and members of the respective parish, with persons' estates not worth less than £100: it had been £40 before 1834.¹³⁵ Of course, none of these offices were open to women. Kenneth Robinson characterised this particular Act as a "...cold-blooded, retrograde piece of legislation..."¹³⁶

If 'Negro' and 'Coloured' reaction to the provisions of the 'abolition compromise' was muted, 'white' reaction was not universally so. The overriding

complaint from those who were proprietors concerned the Bermudian share of the £20,000,00. Many were complaining that that share had not been determined fairly. The House of Assembly therefore sent a petition in August, requesting a change in the system of allocation. After reminding the king and his government that the colonial legislature had abolished the intermediate concession to the plantocracy of an apprenticeship period, the petitioners quickly pointed to the flaw, as they saw it, in basing the amount allocated on the price of the enslaved. They argued that there had existed in Bermuda a large number of enslaved people, due, no less, to "... the salubrity of the climate, the absence of those exhausting and severe occupations pursued in some other Islands, the domestic habits of the people, and the acknowledged tenderness with which Slaves in general have been treated here...". Thus, for this and other reasons, the local prices tended to be lower than the other islands in the British West Indies.¹³⁷ The subtle implication was that the system of allocation punished the proprietor for having kept his or her people well (or at least better) than the proprietors of the other islands. Not all islands were equal, and the compensation scheme favoured some islands at the expense of others. The petitioners' solution was not to base the value of compensation on the average sale price of the enslaved, but simply on the number of slaves in each colony.¹³⁸

T. Spring Rice, Secretary of State for the Colonial Office, received the petition after he was alerted to the nature of Abolition Acts one and two; and he dutifully sent it to the king for consideration in September 1834. Rice wrote back to Chapman, explaining the metropolitan rejection of the demands, and noting that the issue of allocation was, by then, a closed one. As it had already been dealt with

by Parliament, "... it would not be in the power of H. M^{as} Government, even if they could consider it otherwise than unjust, to adopt a different principle...". It would result in a temporary cessation of dispensation to satisfy the Bermudians and thus send "...great alarm..." throughout the British West Indies among proprietors awaiting their expected compensation. He criticised the 'per capita' suggestion of the Bermudians as violating the very essence of the meaning of 'compensation': that is, of giving back to proprietors the full existing value of what was being deprived them. He, in fact, considered the Bermudian scheme as "... the most manifest injustice."¹³⁹

"Assuming", he argued, " that in Barbados the value of a Negro might be at £35 (in Demerara it amounts to £120), it would be obviously contrary to reason to deal with the two unequal quantities upon the supposition of their perfect equality." If conditions should mandate price inequalities, that was unimportant: the price was the estimated value of the property, and that was the amount the holder of the property should come to expect.¹⁴⁰

Yet the complaint over the amount allocated to Bermudian proprietors took on what might be suggested as acrimonious proportions at a meeting of the Smiths parish vestry in 1834. A detailed resolution was submitted complaining not only about the process through which the Emancipation Act was amended, but about parts of Abolition Act 1. This resolution was struck out of the parish minutes, and the editor of the *Bermuda Royal Gazette* refused to publish it in the newspaper.¹⁴¹ Yet Governor Chapman managed to get a hold of it, and sent it directly to the Colonial Office- probably to enlighten Rice as to the nature of emancipation debate in the islands.

The resolution criticised the decision to dispense with the apprenticeship scheme: "...our portion of the English compensation of £20,000,000 for 3,815 slaves at £45 Cry [read: currency] per head would only amount to £171,855 which would be £227,089 less than the estimate for four years of apprenticeship."¹⁴² It added: "...neither the people of these Islands nor any other country that we know of within the British Dominions have delegated to their representatives in legislation the right of taking their property away from them for any purpose whatever not even in extreme cases of national or political necessity without the slightest pretence at compensation."¹⁴³ Yet T. Spring Rice's would have later outlined that a scrupulously fair compensation package had been developed by the metropolitan government: and indeed it had been the Bermudian proprietors who would have done violence to the spirit of compensation.

Nonetheless, the resolution listed the costs expected to be incurred by proprietors of free labour beyond August 1:

1290 of these as agriculturists at 3/4 per day for 300 days in the year, & 4 years their wages would amount to would amount to:	£258,000
163 manufactures at 6/8 for ditto	£65,200
218 sailors at £24 per year for ditto	£20,928
2144 men women & children at 5d ditto	£54,766
sum total:	£398,894

source: CO 37/94, p. 317

However, the most savage attack was devoted to Governor Stephen Chapman over his direction of the process. It was noted that Chapman had from as early as October 29, 1833 to present the bill of Emancipation to the Assembly, yet failed to do so until January 1834, decreasing the amount of time Assemblymen had to examine the various issues with care. Chapman was viewed as not adequate for the task of managing a post-abolition society:

That this meeting [of the Smiths Parish vestry] is deeply impressed with the necessity of having a man of solid information and sound discretion at the head of the civil government in the present critical period, and that we are of the opinion his Excellency Sir Stephen Remnant Chapman has shown himself totally incompetent to fulfill the duties of his station and that an humble address should be presented to his Majesty by the people of these Islands praying that he may be dismissed from his office as Governor & Commander in Chief.¹⁴⁴

Oral tradition records that some individuals found another way to gain something before the freedom of slaves: by kidnapping bondservants and selling them to foreign slave traders.¹⁴⁵ Young Thomas Dolin was under six years old about the time when a preliminary provision of the Emancipation Act had freed such children (a year before general manumission). According to a descendent of Thomas, interviewed in the 1970s, some slave proprietors and merchants were kidnapping children and sending them overseas: "...in order for them to get something," he declared, "they would try to steal the little slaves and sell them...".¹⁴⁶ This fate a group of merchants intended for Thomas Dolin. Though the kidnappers had seized him, he managed to slip away only to be recaptured and flogged for trying to escape. The men placed pickles on his wounds, but the child escaped again; and he made a desperate dash to his mother with one of his tormentors in pursuit. She, a 'Negro' woman named Sophie Dolin, saw her son running towards her, and realising what was happening, grabbed a nearby axe and ran towards her son's pursuer. The man desperately tried to escape the angry woman: she proceeded to chase him around the house until he ran into what was probably a wash room. As the informant put it, the enraged Sophie Dolin was seeking to "...put his entrails into a tub [in the room]...". Though she managed to save her son, it seems plausible that other children were not as fortunate.¹⁴⁷

II. The Results of Radical Resistance

Festina Lente

The implications of the Abolition Acts were quickly appreciated. T. Spring Rice at the Colonial Office did express gratification that the legislature of Bermuda had, by the time of his writing, passed Abolition Acts 1 and 2. Yet the stipulations of Abolition Act 2 received considerable treatment in his reply to Governor Chapman. "The second Act relieves the free coloured population of the Bermuda Islands from every legal disability to which the white Population are not subject...". This he felt was fine. "But," he queried, "the Legislature have in this Act proceeded to raise very considerably the Qualifications of members of the House of Assembly, of Mayors, Aldermen, and Common Councilmen, of vestry men, Church wardens and Constables and the Electors by whom all those different functionaries are chosen."

"In some cases," he added, "these qualifications are more than doubled."¹⁴⁸ He requested from Chapman a numerical accounting of how the free population stood to be affected by these changes: whether the privileges given by Abolition Act 2 would be enjoyed in any 'assignable period'- or "...whether there is reason to conclude that the existing generation will find these privileges to have been nominal only."¹⁴⁹

Chapman's reply basically suggested that they were to be nominal at best and beyond that, this did not pose any real problems. The table below shows what Chapman enumerated for Rice:

Table 35.— Comparison of the Numbers of Men Eligible to be Electors and Office Holders, according to Race, before and after 1834

	before Abolition 'white'	after abolition 'black'	after abolition 'white'	diminution of 'whites'
to vote for Assemblymen	654	31	615	-39
to stand for Assembly		3	no change	0
to vote for mayor, etc.	145	12	137	-8
to stand for mayor, etc.		2	no change	0
to vote at vestry elections	746	33	612	-134
To stand for a vestry office		17	no change	0
To be a juror	513	18	447	-66

Sources: Kenneth Robinson, *Heritage: including an account of Bermudian builders, pilots and petitioners of the earliest post-abolition period, 1834-1839* (London: Macmillan, 1979, 1985), p. 198; CO 37 94, pp. 182-89

Chapman did note that the 'white' constituencies were also reduced by the operation of the new law. But there were to be no by-elections: Assemblymen negotiated changes that would not deprive them of their seats. Thus, by extension, there was to be no large proportion of their 'white' constituents disenfranchised. Only thirty-nine 'whites' stood to be removed from the list of Assembly electors out of a total electorate of 654. Indeed, the truly substantial diminution of an electorate occurred at the parish vestry level.

Chapman noted that free 'Coloureds' and free 'Negroes' had never had their property systematically assessed. This would have been previously unnecessary since they did not have the right of electoral participation before 1834. So he felt that there were grounds for optimism that the tentative number given by him of the number of free 'Negroes' and free 'coloureds' able to enjoy enfranchisement would rise once the official assessment was carried out in the Easter of 1835.¹⁵⁰ This was to prove an optimistic exaggeration: only three men,

'black' or 'coloured', would emerge qualified who could stand for election at the Assembly level. Yet, those three were effectively disqualified, as they had to rely on 'white' electors not yet prepared to have them in the same church pew, or at the same school, much less in the same all-powerful legislature.

But, again, this dilemma flowed naturally from the 1834 petition. Petitioners had insisted on the importance of a freehold property qualification as evidence of a 'stake' in the country, and the belief that this gave one the capacity to be involved in its management. But these 'stakes', however, were to be measured in proportion to the value of the property, and rights going to those with the highest 'stakes'. It would take several decades before any 'Negro/Coloured' sat in the Assembly, and until 1960s before adults, and especially 'Negro/Coloured' men and women, could vote without a property qualification.

Yet, the more notable aspect of this question is the extent to which the metropolitan elite left their 'Negro' and 'Coloured' allies to live with the implications of this political problem. Governor Chapman wrote a much longer letter to the Colonial Office on November 13, 1834, justifying further these constitutional changes under a principle of *festina lente*. Wealth, a crude criterion, he argued, would be the determinant of the appropriateness of one's involvement in government. "The effect...", he wrote, "was designed to be that of securing to the Whites, as the wealthier class, the ascendancy which they lose as the European class."¹⁵¹ He proclaimed, "...wealth and Poverty, will divide Society much in the same way as European and African Descent have been wont to divide it."

"Still," he concluded, "there is a Stimulus and Reward to Industry, be the complexion what it may. There is a legal Equality, though an actual inequality."¹⁵²

Convenience and safety were the justifications for allowing, as he put it, the 'actual Supremacy of the whites' (he had crossed out 'absolute' as the determiner for 'supremacy of the whites' in his letter) to survive its 'legal' extinction- and to "...depart from them by degrees, than to reach the same end by a more abrupt method."¹⁵³ Chapman had no faith in the 38 freeholders to develop a politics that would not compromise 'public order' concerns: he put more faith in the 'white' assemblymen. Later governors, however, would not entertain this type of faith, and were recorded expressing different opinions: that the very restrictive nature of the franchise generally was in conflict with British imperial interests, as the class that dominated the legislature was not always working for the good of those interests. Paradoxically, like the 'Negro/Coloured' subjects of the crown, later governors found themselves caught in the political implications of Abolition Act 2.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, in 1834, no one in the Colonial Office seemed inclined to take up T. Spring Rice's earlier concern about the franchise, and the subject seems to have been dropped.

Conclusion

If Susette Lloyd's walk through the St. George's churchyard revealed the intentions behind the 'customs of the country' in Bermuda, another walk through another churchyard would symbolise the goals of the countervailing 'Negro' and 'coloured' resistance. Lloyd wrote in May 1830 of her attendance at a church in Warwick parish.

"While walking round the churchyard," she recalled, "the clerk, who is a free Negro, and a highly respectable person, came up and begged that I would come and see his *missis*." [italics in text] She continued:

I had often been struck in passing, with the romantic situation of his little cottage, which lies on the brow of a chain of green hills, bending over the margin of a quiet lake, in the very nook where Gainsborough would have placed it... The interior was perfectly unique, and, as our English cottagers would say, in apple-pie order: the floor was brightly polished-- a cedar table, and half a dozen chairs, were ranged round the white-washed walls, on which hung a looking-glass, some gaily-coloured prints, in showy gilt frames-- and in one corner sparkled a sort of Dutch cupboard, filled with old fashion basins and tea pots, with a silver ladle to boot-- all bearing evidence to the notable housewifery of his dear Elsy. The room was scented with delicious perfume of the oranges which she was employed in making into marmalade; she appeared much pleased when I accepted her invitation to taste some; and, without disparagement to our Scotch marmalade, I must do Elsy the justice to say that I never tasted any that excelled hers.¹⁵⁵

The 'Free Negro', whom Lloyd by shorthand described as 'the clerk', was a vestry office keeper. He was also a freeholder. The clerk and his wife had gone to considerable effort to produce a lifestyle mirroring the metropolitan-advocated model. Plausibly, it can be ventured that Lloyd's role was, as far as they conceived it, to ratify this similarity. This she did; but by so doing, she indirectly declared the difference between the clerk and his wife on one hand, and the 'whites' on the other to be merely one (to paraphrase the 1834 free 'Negro' and 'coloured' petition) of 'complexion alone'. That she did so is supported by her comments: her

need to present this as an entirely British scene. Gainsborough, the painter of rustic British scenes, was invoked. The house was seen to satisfy English cottager tastes; and Elsy's marmalade surpassed the Scottish model. These were the fruits of a policy of emulation.

All of this, of course, was to underscore, in Lloyd's mind, the benefits of the 'moral and intellectual preparation' of the 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' for the gift of Emancipation: that as a result of this 'preparation', they would come to live like true British subjects. She, thus, reported with undisguised glee on how they had successfully reproduced the material conditions lived by 'whites' in Britain and, by extension, the 'whites' in Bermuda. This constituted the 'politics of emulation'.

Yet, in spite of the extent to which the clerk and his wife approached this condition materially, they were still treated by local 'whites' as legal, social, and political inferiors. As a 'Free Negro', though trusted with the vestry business, the clerk required a certificate in order to present evidence in court under the *Amelioration Act* amendments. These amendments would have been in operation at the time of Lloyd's visit. He was also disenfranchised, and subjected to 'social conventions' that not just communicated difference but advocated his social and spiritual inferiority.

Lloyd had to have seen 'white' expressions of social and ecclesiastical inferiority as her eyes gazed around the Warwick church itself from her privileged place in the body of the chapel. She would have seen the clerk and others, with great inconvenience to themselves, going to their allocated spaces: "The accommodation for the blacks is so confined, that many are obliged to remain

outside, thronging the doors and windows." She noted the "...very good..." 'Negro' and 'Coloured' burial ground, outside the churchyard: "... they are not permitted to be interred in the churchyard belonging to the whites." The 'whites' took possession of the churchyard for themselves: the 'blacks' she noted, were obliged to purchase burial grounds elsewhere.¹⁵⁶

Moreover, the matter of fact acceptance of these customs in Lloyd seemed to have replaced the regret-tinged comments of her earliest letter. One might see the journey between this early letter on the St. George's churchyard, and the letter about the Warwick church, as symbolising the totality of metropolitan involvement in 'Negro' and 'coloured' aspirations: the evolution of this involvement from the strident and intractable stance of Stephenson to the policies of accommodation and compromise of Joshua Marsden, Aubrey Spencer and John Inglis. What is equally notable is the comment Lloyd appended to her optimistic monologue on Bermudian slavery:

Still... the coloured inhabitants of Bermuda are bondsmen, and have long suffered the two heaviest ills of bondage, a political incapacity to receive equal justice, and a spiritual privation of religious instruction and happiness.¹⁵⁷

The projects of radical resistance discussed in this chapter, and symbolised by the Warwick clerk and his wife, were attempts to gain relief from these two 'heaviest ills of bondage'; and if the overriding intention of the 'customs of the country' was to preserve social inequalities, the overriding design of the 'Negro' and 'coloured' challenges to them, studied in this chapter, was to render meaningless the distinction between this subordinate class of colonists and the colonial 'whites': they were demands for social and material equality.

Yet one might still perceive a contradiction at the centre of the distinction between revolutionary and radical resistance. If the difference between them turns on the definition of revolution 'as the removal of a society's leadership', cannot at the heart of even the most gradual radicalism beat the overthrow of an elite by the governed? Could not even the efforts of the 'Negro clerk' result in the slow and gradual displacement of the traditional 'white' oligarchy? The question provides an opportunity to underscore, again, the essential differences between the two approaches to resistance: by recalling the point that the political radicalism of the nineteenth century, whatever its designs, was not an anti-colonial movement. Unlike the Conspiracy of 1761, there were no designs to pull the Bermuda colony out of its British imperial orbit: to constitute it as a Makandalian 'black' enclave state, or to place it within the gravity of another European political system.

It can be accepted that the granting of socio-political equality in principle could ultimately threaten the exclusive constitutional and political privileges of the colonial elite, and portend its overthrow. But even accepting a desire for the constitutional power of the colonial elite would still not be the same as an attempt on the dominion and prerogatives of the imperial government; and the removal of the colonial elite, as the local proprietary class was painfully aware, was not always the same as such a challenge against the dominion and prerogatives of the crown.

Moreover, the 'Negro' and 'Coloured' radicals of Bermuda were not Jacobins: no 'Negro' and 'Coloured' masses would surge through the streets of London with the 'white' English poor to overthrow royal authority. Expressions of 'Negro' and 'coloured' adherence to 'procedure', as implied by the 1834 petition,

made it clear that the metropolitan elite was not a competing interest, even if the local colonial elite conceivably was. This was in spite of the fact that it was the metropolitan elite, in support of colonial concerns, that ultimately ratified the gentle insertion of a restraining bit into the teeth of local 'Negro' and 'coloured' political aspirations.

Yet beyond the compromises, the outline of the relationship between 'Black'/'coloured' radicalism and metropolitan humanitarianism takes symbolic form in the narrative of Mary Prince. Written during the final years of the British slaveocracy, and at the political height of the 'Humanitarian Revolution' (through a process itself that reflected this relationship) her words testify to the nature a partnership that characterised 'black' and 'coloured' radical resistance in Bermuda:

Oh the horrors of slavery!- How the thought of it pains my heart!
But the truth ought to be told of it; and what my eyes have seen I
think it is my duty to relate; for few people in England know
what slavery is. I have been a slave- I have felt what a slave
feels, and I know what a slave knows; and I would have all the
good people in England to know it too, that they may break our
chains and set us free.¹⁵⁸

Endnotes: Chapter VIII

¹ *Bermuda Royal Gazette*, January 21, 1834.

² Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 168.

³ *Slave Registration List 1821*, p. 93.

⁴ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives, "The Third Triennial Registration of Slaves in the Bermudas under the Act entitled 'An Act for the Complete Registration of Slaves' - passed the 24th day of March 1827: Commencing 1st September 1833 and ending 1st August 1834," *Slave Registration List 1833-4*, p. 52.

⁵ Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels*, p. 80-1, and passim. Moira Ferguson implied that Mary Prince had as a design to leave Bermuda and go to Antigua, perhaps in search of the relative advantages this island could provide her. To that end, she cleverly manipulated her sale to the Wood family, her final owners. About Antigua, Ferguson wrote: "...Antigua was the most attractive island for any slave actively thinking of freedom. Free black men were permitted to vote there and, although this law did not apply to Mary Prince, its relative liberality in the West Indian islands was symbolically significant." Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, pp. 11-2. Whatever were the true nature of Antigua and her thoughts on the island, relevant in her experiences are her mercantile relationships. These fit with the view that Antigua had a relatively large society of successful entrepreneurial 'blacks'. See above, Chapter V: "Forces and Contradictions: Enslaved Merchant Mariners".

⁶ This conclusion rests upon an entry in the *Slave Registration List, 1821*, in which a note describes him as "James Athil, proprietor". It also lists him as a slave proprietor, but not as a slave. *Slave Registration List 1821*, p. 9.

⁷ Kenneth Robinson, *Heritage: including an account of Bermudian Builders, pilots and petitioners of the earliest post-abolition period, 1834-1859* (London: Macmillan, 1979, 1985), p. 78. Not much else emerges about Athill's personal life, although a great deal exists concerning his professional, social, and political activities. He lived until 1868, dying in St. George's at the age of eighty years. He is recorded on October 17, 1863 as marrying (or married to) Ruth Albouy. He would have then been seventy-seven years of age. Neither the church registers of baptisms nor his obituary notice mention any children. His remains lie in a large stone vault located in the old 'Free Black and Free Coloured' cemetery of the St. Peter's Parish Church. See *19th Century Church Registers of Bermuda*, indexed by A.C. Hollis-Hallett (Bermuda: Juniperhill Press, 1997), p. 134, and passim; and *Bermuda Gazette*, October 6, 1868.

⁸ Robinson, *Heritage*, p. 79.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹¹ *Slave Registration List 1830*, p. 143.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 143; *Slave Registration List 1821*, p. 9; *Slave Registration List 1833-4*, p. 144.

¹³ Robinson, *Heritage*, p. 74.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁵ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 179.

¹⁶ Ivor Wilks, "The Rise of the Akwamu Empire," p. 107. Wilks noted how Gã populations, fleeing ahead of the Akwamu armies (c.1677), had settled along the coast. "By this time sizeable Gã towns had already grown up around each of the forts, and these must have received the refugees from Great Accra. Socco, a name that survives in the modern Tshoco, lay a little west of the English Fort James." Socco became a major city of the Gã republic of Accra, but it too, would fall to Akwamu in the 1680s. It expanded its function of slave trading, especially after 1700, and it is significant that the English operated a fort there during the eighteenth century. See Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast*, p. 200.

¹⁷ CO 37 49, p. 79.

¹⁸ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 178.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 179. Wrote Packwood: "He owned an outdoor refreshment establishment, which proved popular with travellers on horseback."

²⁰ Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, pp. 157-8.

²¹ BB 1832, p. 126; BB 1834, p. 127.

²² Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, pp. 157-8.

²³ Edward Fraser, "Letter from Edward Fraser of Bermuda, a Man of Colour", *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1827, p. 783.

- ²⁴ James Christie Esten, "Speech Delivered at Anniversary Meeting of the Bible Societies in England", *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1824-5, p. 422.
- ²⁵ Fraser, "Letter from Edward Fraser," p. 784.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 784.
- ²⁷ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 113.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- ²⁹ Fraser, "Letter from Edward Fraser," p. 783.
- ³⁰ CO 40 32, p. 44.
- ³¹ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 113.
- ³² CO 40 32, p. 45.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 48.
- ³⁴ CO 37 49, p. 79.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-3.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- ⁴² Archibald C. Hollis Hallett, *Chronicle of a Colonial Church 1612-1826 Bermuda* (Bermuda: Juniperhill Press, 1993), p. 250.
- ⁴³ CO 37 49, p. 80.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- ⁴⁸ Henry C. Wilkinson, *Bermuda from Sail to Steam: the history of the island from 1748 to 1901*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1973) p. 216.
- ⁴⁹ CO 37 49, p. 82.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- ⁵³ CO 37 49, p. 77.
- ⁵⁴ CO 39 12, no. 231.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 231.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 231; Hallett, *Chronicle of a Colonial Church, Bermuda*, pp. 250-1.
- ⁵⁷ Kennedy, *Biography of a Colonial Town*, p. 62.
- ⁵⁸ Bermuda. Bermuda Archives "Letter of Rev. Clayton Munro to Lillian Hayward", November 8, 1935, St. George's Historical Society; Marsden, *Narrative of a Mission*, p. 127.
- ⁵⁹ Hallett, *Chronicle of a Colonial Church*, p. 250.
- ⁶⁰ "Letter of Rev. Clayton Munro to Lillian Hayward".
- ⁶¹ *Bermuda Gazette*, May 12, 1800.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, August 2, 1800.
- ⁶³ Hallett, *Chronicle of a Colonial Church*, p. 251.
- ⁶⁴ Braithwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica*, pp. 201, 210.
- ⁶⁵ Marsden, *Narrative of a Mission*, p. 121.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 151.
- ⁶⁹ Robinson, *Heritage*, p. 151; Marsden, *Narrative of a Mission*, passim.
- ⁷⁰ Marsden, *Narrative of a Mission*, p. 144.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- ⁷⁵ Esten, "Speech", p. 422.
- ⁷⁶ Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, pp. 113-4.
- ⁷⁷ Marsden, *Narrative of a Mission*, p. 149.

- ⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 155-7; Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 111.
- ⁷⁹ Marsden, *Narrative of a Mission*, pp. 154-5; Packwood, *Chained on the Rock*, p. 111.
- ⁸⁰ Marsden, *Narrative of a Mission*, p. 148.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., p. 148.
- ⁸² Ibid., p. 148.
- ⁸³ Ibid., p. 156.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 156.
- ⁸⁵ BB 1834, p. 126; Esten, "Speech" p. 422.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 422.
- ⁸⁷ Robinson, *Heritage*, p. 82; BB 1832, p. 126.
- ⁸⁸ Robinson, *Heritage*, p. 82; BB 1832, p. 126.
- ⁸⁹ Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, pp. 152-3.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 151-3.
- ⁹¹ BB 1834, p. 127; Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, pp. 151-3.
- ⁹² Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, p. 151.
- ⁹³ Ibid., pp. 61.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 63.
- ⁹⁵ Esten, "Speech", p. 549.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 549.
- ⁹⁷ Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, p. 64.
- ⁹⁸ *The Dictionary of National Biography*, XVI, p. 747.
- ⁹⁹ Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, p. 61.
- ¹⁰⁰ Graeme S. Mount and Joan E. Mount, "Bishop John Inglis and his attitude toward race in Bermuda in the era of emancipation", *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, vol. 25 (1983), p. 25.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 25; Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, pp. 133-4.
- ¹⁰² Mount, "Bishop Inglis and his attitude toward race," pp. 27-8.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 28.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 29.
- ¹⁰⁵ Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, pp. 139-40.
- ¹⁰⁶ Mount, "Bishop Inglis and his attitude toward race," p. 28.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 28.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 30.
- ¹⁰⁹ Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, p. 165.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 202-3.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 135.
- ¹¹² Ibid., p. 203.
- ¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 135-6.
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 134-5.
- ¹¹⁵ BB 1832, p. 126.
- ¹¹⁶ CO 37 94, p. 316.
- ¹¹⁷ *Bermuda Gazette*, January 21, 1834.
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁹ Ibid., February 28, 1824.
- ¹²⁰ Ibid.
- ¹²¹ Ibid., November 11, 1826, p. 88.
- ¹²² Ibid.
- ¹²³ Ibid., January 21, 1834.
- ¹²⁴ *Bound Manuscript Acts*, no. 24, p. 144.
- ¹²⁵ Section 36 read: "And be it further enacted, that any property bequeathed or given to any slave, or any property purchased with value or proceeds thereof, shall, *in law*, be held and deemed to be, to all intents and purposes, the property of such slave; and that it shall and may be lawful for any slave to bequeath by will, or otherwise to dispose of such property, so bequeathed or given, or any property purchased with the value or proceeds thereof." [italics added] Ibid., p. 146.
- ¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 146.
- ¹²⁷ Ibid., pp. 143-4.
- ¹²⁸ *Bermuda Gazette*, January 21, 1834.
- ¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ James Athill, Thomas Fox, Sr., and James Esten Forbes. Forbes is recorded, in 1833-4, as owning Rebecca, a thirty-three year old 'black' woman from Tobago, whom he employed as a house servant. *Slave Registration List 1833-4*, p. 155.

¹³¹ Robinson, *Heritage*, pp. 280-1.

¹³² CO 37 94, p. 317.

¹³³ Robinson, *Heritage*, p. 194.

¹³⁴ CO 37 94, p. 28.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-9.

¹³⁶ Robinson, *Heritage*, p. 197.

¹³⁷ CO 37 94, pp. 161-2.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

¹³⁹ CO 38 21, pp. 445-7.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 445-7.

¹⁴¹ CO 37 94, p. 316.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 317.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

¹⁴⁵ Nellie Musson, *Mind the Onion Seed: Black 'Roots' Bermuda* (Hamilton, Bermuda: Nellie Musson, 1979), p. 57. Musson contended: "Although Bermudians knew that their slaves were to be freed in just a few days, they heartlessly sold them to Southern American traders. Either unwilling to let their slaves go free, or aware that the amount was far below what could be obtained from American traders, many holders in Bermuda sold their slaves sometimes in dozen lots of 'various shapes and sizes'. Also, oral history relates that ships anchored off the north shore waited to carry their human cargo away from the Island and away from freedom. Because of the British embargo on ocean trading, slaves were quickly secreted from the colonies to the American mainland."

¹⁴⁶ Mark Albouy, interview by Florenz Maxwell, May 1979, Bermuda, transcript, p. 10.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁸ CO 38 21, pp. 440-3.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 440-3.

¹⁵⁰ CO 37 94, pp. 187-9.

¹⁵¹ CO 37 94, pp. 191-2.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 191-2.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 191-2.

¹⁵⁴ Governor G. Digby Barker wrote in 1898: "My predecessor in his confidential despatch of the 29th July 1892 shewed how the present Franchise practically placed all legislative power in the hands of the landowners and how the ascendancy of that class is antagonistic to Imperial interests. In my opinion these have equal force at the present day..."; Bermuda. Bermuda Archives. Governor Despatches, 1900, CS 6/2/2, pp. 289-90.

¹⁵⁵ Lloyd, *Sketches of Bermuda*, pp. 140-2.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-42.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁵⁸ Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, p. 64.

Conclusion

'Men themselves make history but in a given environment which conditions them.'

--- Friedrich Engels¹

"A member of the ground crew at an air base on the outskirts of London took a plane and, with no further experience as a pilot, flew it across the Channel."² The member of the ground crew, a man, was 'colored'. Since he was 'colored', so the story goes, he had been denied the right to join the flying crew. "This prohibition becomes for him," the narrator continued, " a subjective impoverishment, but he immediately goes beyond the subjective to the objective. This denied future reflects to him the fate of his 'race' and the racism of the English. The *general* revolt on the part of colored men against colonialists is expressed *in him* by his particular refusal of this prohibition." [italics in text]³

This story was told by French philosopher and writer Jean-Paul Sartre, a part of his design to outline what was both a political programme and a heuristic technique. It appeared in his book *Search for a Method*, the more digestible prologue to his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Both books, as their titles imply, sought to found a study of the human group upon an analysis of human individuals, and to examine the 'general act' as it was expressed in and by the individual action. For him, group revolt was always expressing itself through and in any one particular act of resistance.

But the more important point Sartre made through this story concerned the human individual and its 'project'. The 'human individual' was not thought of by

him as a fly caught in, and determined by, a dense web of past causes: "...men make their history on the basis of the real, prior conditions... but it is *the men* who make it and not the prior conditions. Otherwise men would be merely the vehicles of human forces which, through them, would govern the social world." [italics in text]⁴ Sartre railed against 'mechanistic Marxists' and Stalinists who were content to view humanity as the epiphenomenon of history, beaten down by the mass pressure of the past, and herded into the collective farms of historical materialism. "To be sure, these conditions exist, and it is they, they alone, which can furnish a direction and a material reality to the changes which are in preparation," he declared; "but the movement of human *praxis* goes beyond them while conserving them." [italics in text]⁵

It is this relationship between individual and his or her environment that has constituted the major theme of this examination of resistance. The projects of 'Negroes', 'mulattos', 'blacks' or 'coloureds', bond and free, were built out of the same milieu that constituted the 'customs of the country'. These projects carried with them the intention of changing profoundly the laws and culture of the colony. The object of this thesis was to follow these projects.

It began in this quest by showing how, out of a historical tradition, a declining economy, an expanding maritime industry, governmental corruption or dissension, and profound changes in the 'white' demography (that made 'white' women the largest group in the colony) came the indifferently enforced restrictions on 'Negroes' and 'mulattos'. The surreptitious application of poison was one response to these restrictions. When Sarah Bassett (through Beck), Affey/Ruth, James, Cockoo, and others, allegedly attempted to destroy their individual

proprietors by the application of African science, they shook up a proprietor mindset which had blissfully not been expecting it.

Through their poison, moreover, they equally changed the world both bond and free lived in. Proprietors had been able to engage in the mundane acts of life with little fear in the years before the discovery of the poisoning plots. But after 1730, these mundane activities took on a new and fearsome significance. Every morsel of food eaten carried the potential of a lingering and painful death. Death lurked in the shadows of cupboards and hovered over doorways. Natural death, in the old 'pre-poison world' was death by disease, accident, rotten food, or perhaps old age. Death in this new world carried the possibility of the unnatural 'machinations of evil-minded persons'.

The attempts by proprietors to escape this new world resulted in a change in the constitution of the 'customs of the country'. New laws were passed which deprived 'Negroes', 'mulattos', 'mustees', and 'Indians' of some remaining basic rights. For example, the right to a jury trial was taken away, and 'whites' were given greater authority to kill slaves. Proprietors, thus, found themselves with near life or death power over their human property; and those 'Negroes', 'mulattos', 'mustees' and 'Indians' who had achieved manumission were suddenly faced with re-enslavement or exile. All of these laws were given smooth reception in England by letters of strident, and often exaggerated, protest.

This was the world that the servile revolutionaries of 1761 emerged into. On the one hand, the maritime revolution had given them a secret and relatively profitable source of income. By claiming the services of the remaining 'white' men, it also weakened the local policing infrastructure as easily as the economy

undermined local moral traditions. 'Negro' and 'mulatto' merchant mariners were able to exploit lapses in policing and morality to expand a virtually invisible and international network of trade. But potentially, proprietors still had life and death powers over them. Proprietors also extracted their salaries and profits giving them whatever they felt was politically or personally appropriate. The economic need felt by bondservants, forced to provide for the well-being of their families and that of a proprietor's household, often did not mollify the extent of the expropriation. If it did, it did not alter the institution itself: bondservants worked, turned over their salaries to their proprietors, and were given or allowed 'a surplus' according to the proprietor's whim. It was a political relationship with heavy feudal overtones.

With the promise of new 'Negro Laws', a Makandal revolt in the international context, and an infrastructure challenged by the internal conflicts of the 1750s (as well as low 'white' male numbers), revolution was viewed by a few bondservants as the best means to correct the state of affairs. Poison and revolutionary intent, the enslaved merchant sailor and the enslaved African, joined forces and produced the Conspiracy of 1761.

The collapse of this revolutionary conspiracy began the development of a new socio-political context, with a re-constituted set of 'customs of the country'. This context included a changing demography and an economic decline in the latter years of slavery. Also, with the arrival of seven companies of the 47th Regiment from the Bahamas in 1797, the policing network was expanded, offsetting the still relatively low 'white' male numbers. Revolution, even with the help of other states, would become more problematically achieved than it had been in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

But free 'Negroes' and free 'coloureds' were now able to, with security, legally exist in the colony, albeit under a number of restrictions. They could, however, purchase land, businesses, build ships and even own other human beings. They constituted themselves as a new class between slave and free; and they became, again, an embodiment of what was possible for 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' in Bermuda. Still, all 'Negroes' and 'mulattos' were made politically and socially distinct from, and inferior to, 'whites'. Some of the laws placed on them were old, such as the restrictions that allocated segregated and restricted space to 'Negroes' and 'coloureds'. Many others appeared as the codification of earlier restrictions. All were deeply resented by 'Negroes' and 'coloureds' who had, as a result of a changing economic and social context, new aspirations for themselves as subjects and colonists.

Thus, a new resistance emerged from 1800 to 1834 which had as its aim the 'Negro' and 'coloured' desire for socio-political equality. Their alliances with metropolitan interests reflected the changing, exploitable English liberal context. Abolition Acts I and II, apart from being constitutive of the post-Emancipation socio-political order, were the products, the syntheses, of a vast array of political activity, local and international.

But the revolutionaries and radicals who gave birth to these projects of resistance also defined themselves by so doing. The 'colored-ground crewman' of Sartre's story transformed himself, by his 'theft', into a 'colored-pilot', a 'colored-rebel', and even a 'colored-anti-colonialist'. Those who filled the pages of this past discussion, through their *individual* acts of resistance, also re-constituted a new

identity for themselves, an identity as men and women in resistance: as poison technicians, revolutionaries and anti-colonialists, or radical reformers.

Sartre's method (as well as his absolute belief that freedom and choice constituted the fate of all humanity) shaped, from a respectable distance, the ideological context of this doctoral thesis: the fundamental belief that 'Negroes', 'Mulattos', 'blacks', and 'coloureds' were as free as other members of the human family to shape 'the world' they inhabited. They were the agents and contributors, through their resistance and even through their accommodation, to the global historical context that shaped, and continues to shape, their descendants.

Endnotes: Conclusion

¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, translated by Hazel Barnes (New York: Vintage, 1968), p. 85.

² Ibid., p. 95.

³ Ibid., p. 95.

⁴ Ibid., p. 87.

⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

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